JOHN R. MARVIN

The Wrath-Bearing Tree

North of Cheyenne the country was broken and eroded in long arroyos and flat mesas, and there were few settlers in these badlands, though there were beginnings, small ranches, homesteads and farms on the greener upglades. The silver rush had passed, though the mines were open, and there were a few small strikes, but the settlers who remained were migratory, waiting to go somewhere better, except for a handful of ranchers and those for whom (lust, poverty, and terror having run their course) this was somewhere near the end of the string. The day was keen, cold, with a threat of snow. A zephyr like a diminutive cyclone whirled away into the distance, a diminishing skirl over the light dust of snow, soon vitiated by the broken contours of the land. Where the two riders had just topped one of the mesquite knolls there was a momentary view of the uneroded uplands beyond, which led finally to the steep wall of the mountains, now only a blue surge on the horizon, not real in distance or time over the empty honey-combed flats. The first rider, Ira Fawley, twisted in his saddle and drank liquor from a leather canister; the second rider, Lloyd Logan, who was older and greying, looked down at his jug, but did not touch it. Ira hung the jug on the horn, satisfied, since in winter he habitually drank in contempt of the cold. His straight mane of yellow hair ruffled in the breeze, and his muskrat cap was strung over one square shoulder, decorative and mocking. He was a very powerful huge man with blue eyes that were austere and impersonal, an expression without malice or kindness. He always rode ahead, tense and erect, and he never rode at less than a canter. Twisting the reins savagely, he sent the tired gelding plunging down the little ravines and straining again up the sandy knolls. He looked back where Logan was following hard with his thin haughty face set in a grimace of fatigue, and he noticed that the sun was getting low. He leaned forward spurring the horse and listened to the silence regroup behind him on the

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slopes and bottoms. The silence did not bother him since he could crack it with an effort of his will. He lived a life of constant check and balance. The silence now was like silt from the dead sun through which he rode coldly, with dispassion.

As he rode he noticed how the sundown left the gulches ahead stained in shadows that lay in sleepy eddies of cold beneath the iridescent reaches of the broken jagged-edged flats. He was a keen observer, self-taught; his mind habitually worked at a level above his knowledge of words because he never quite forgot the faces, the mouths that said them. He had been thrown in with all kinds of men, and he had always listened, studied and remembered. He was at ease anywhere, at peace nowhere. All he had ever liked doing in life was riding alone through the sunlight or rain, unattached and unwatched. He was himself then, with no principles or interests beyond his own pride in being.

The horse staggered up another ridge beneath him, splay-legged, and he rode on through another wall of silence wrenching it aside with the rapine of his will. Logan's horse came crashing down beside him, and he turned with a wry glance at the man, then nodded toward the horizon.

"See it old man. Nothin' like Kaintucky. One mistake up there, and hit may be you'll come washin' down in the Spring on a headwater end over end like a log."

For a minute Logan only rode beside him, his thin eaglet's face tense and haggard, looking ahead to the surge of icy blue that lay beyond the dark outline of the hills and up, where the mountains rose supine and flawless in deep snow.

"I've had my fling," Logan said suddenly. He spoke with a blatant heatless vehemence. "I'm through. I never intended follow-in' Clay thus far. Go ahead. Get him!. .He stole your gear. There aint no faith left among mankind."

Ira reined up facing Logan: his eyes were lit by an amused quietness. Finally he bent, lifted the jug again and drank; his eyes motionless, he rewound it to the horn.

"More faith than aught of anything else," he said softly, as if Logan was not really there, fencing or pretending in the sunlight. "I'm goin' on. Not because I care about the money, nor him either. Lloyd, I think I just want to hit trail."

Logan looked away toward the mountains. Part of the craft and knowing had fled from his lean face. He looked round momentarily

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as if searching for comfort, and found only the abysses of shadows crouched round the sunny headlands.

"I'm headin' back before dark," he said warily. "A man of my years loses quickness." He rubbed his thighs. "A head aint any good when you've lost quickness."

Ira studied Logan's face, observant of the touch of fear there, mingled with guile, feeling the cold sting his own eyes. Then he laughed with slow joyless irony.

"What've you to fear?" he asked. "What's Clay got to lose either?"

Logan answered him by the chillness of his look, and he dismounted suddenly in the frosted turf by the knoll; then he unhooked his jug and twirled it up to his mouth. He drank casually but not deeply, wiped his trim mouth with the back of his hand and hung the jug back. His hands were steady, but a thin sweat glistened on his temples.

"How's a man to know?" he said—the bright, fierce affability. "Every man's got his aim. Clay figured he needed your money to make a new start. Now that's bad wisdom, call it what you will. Me, I aint never been further from here in twenty years than yonder meadows. I figure a man's got to hold what he has and be patient." He spat regretfully in the frost. "Look here, I got plenty now. For me. Leastways I aint dead yet. That's why I'm goin' back. It aint because it was your money he stole, nor because he's my cousin."

For a time Ira only sat the horse looking down at Lloyd Logan. He saw the black silhouette of his own horse and of himself stretching over the former Indian trader, once the power of Cheyenne, the leader over himself, Ira Fawley who had learned the power and weakness of evil; now his pardner, a shrewdness in him where the old crazy gleam had been. Times changed like shifting sands; Ira's mocking mind played back and forth now between the man before him and the man far up in the white cold, Clay the third pardner—a quick bold schemer.

"I ought to've felled you both with my fists."

There was no sullenness in his expression, only his cold heedless eyes, his strong austere mouth. Logan bent his head and said nothing. Ira watched a sand-devil whirl away into the blueing distance; then whistling softly to himself he began to dismount. His boots printed deep in the rime and sand, he stood half facing

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Logan, quiet and poised, almost dreamy, towering over Logan as he assembled and lighted the clay pipe. He did not remove his eyes from Logan's face; he always lighted his pipe in the void of the evening. From ten years of pillage, he had retained this thing alone, this pipe that appealed to him.

Logan looked round him with lonesome quietness, and in the blue of the dying day he began to tighten the saddle-girth. Ira remained motionless, seeming to joy in the writhen snake-like figures on the bowl of the pipe; all else was joyless. He was not now thinking of Clay, but of Audrey Mitchell far behind him now in Cheyenne village. Her eyes seemed to watch him now—not with love or unlove, just shadowy and sheltering and without any dimension. Then he turned his thoughts back to Logan, and there was the feeling again. From the first, he had sensed Logan's and Audrey's alikeness: back of the coldness of each of them lay a dust of sentiment that he did not share—it made them mean in an impulsive way, more lewd than he—and he had watched this dust of pollen draw them together.

In the hollows it was purple, dark and pitted as Audrey's eyes when hate filled them. He felt something bitterer than the dust—a touch of bewilderment, and he laughed sardonically aloud. Logan turned to look at him with a shrewd expression in which there was also a mist of fear; he knelt and began to pry the dry mesquite stalks, heaping them for fire. Ira watched an instant, and drifted slowly over beside the crouched man. Then with the sharp toe of his boot, he prodded the heap of twigs asunder.

Logan's hands remained still, dangling at his boot-tips as the whites of his eyes turned slowly up. In all the purpling stillness there was no other movement.

"There's no need of fire," Ira said. "I'm goin' on. I want to be movin'."

Logan remained still a moment. Then he rose and seemed to scan again the emptiness around them. Eventually, the blithe smile touched his callous eyes.

"Clay made a bad mistake." He clucked his teeth. "No doubt of that. I'll just ride by Cheyenne and tell Audrey Mitchell about you...about Clay too. So there won't be no worryin' done."

Ira turned away, seeming to scent in Logan the yearning rise of seeded dust—toward something in her that for Logan was always spring. He did not care, knowing that Lloyd and Audrey

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would betray him; he felt himself merely alone, and after their bodies met, he would still be alone. He looked up; winds like little whippets played among the sage. His grey eyes became august, impersonal, as he put away the pipe.

"Go on and see Audrey," he said.

Abruptly, he turned to his horse, half-watching as Logan turned and began to mount. Behind Logan the gulches were gutted purple, but the white knolls would stay light until the sundown when every known object would swoon away. He felt this ability to lift his mind out of a scene in which he was caught, seeing it as if locating it forever, just as it escaped toward nothing at all.

Whirling, he vaulted the saddle with a single powerful leap while Logan sat his mount facing him. He noticed again Logan's ageless small body, the unsated little eyes.

Logan raised his palm in a gesture of parting, and his mouth shaped into some half-mocking regret.

"See you in a day or two, Ira. Hope you have a mite of luck up there. Remember though, you still got a share."

Ira looked at him in slow withdrawn contemplation. Then he laughed easily.

"It'll take more than you've got left to keep her tame," he said.

In the trance of stillness, Logan turned his face away, seeming to hesitate, then whirled the horse and plunged down the purple ravine.

For a while as he watched, Logan was only a moving figure down the precipitate dusk of the gulley, like a shadow he might have projected on the wall with his thumbs and wrists. There seemed nothing left of Logan but this shadow, just as, in his sudden memory, Audrey's body at night became like a nest of wet leaves, a soil in the inmost pitchblack of his mind where there was nothing else—only sometimes a sound like that of whirring wings—from a source beyond recollection.

Then horse and rider plunged upward again into light, real again, seeming to make some demand upon him—either sympathy enough to let him ride on, or hate enough to stop him, neither of which he possessed. His hand dropped away from the stock of his rifle. It was this demand that he had long since denied to Logan: between them there had never been a trust to betray nor any vow to break; just as there was nothing between Clay and himself but the one thing—some pretence of Clay's, an innocence crueller than hate.

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He watched as the black horse and rider disappeared over the ledge of gloom, in a faint downbeat of hooves. Then he loosened the rifle in the sheath, his expression merely calm, austere, and he spun the gelding and rode on down the ravine.

It was a long hollow, and it led far away into the rutted semi-darkness. In the frosty sand he could still make out the faint hoofprints of the horse ahead, though indistinct like bird-claws. Loneliness descended into the hollow around him, and to his mind Audrey already lay darkly secure and glutted, having fed on Logan beyond the dusty shades of her room. He thought of it without pleasure or pain. There seemed nothing for him to view, past or present, but what was there—the grey dunes, the coming night—and what was not there or anywhere near, the retreating figure of Clay. He did not mind the darkness: it was less harmful to his way of feeling than the skies of day; there was always the dearth, day or night, but he had learned to become graver, more brilliant than the people, the lives it took under.

He lighted the clay pipe, his expression calm with some appearance of gentleness or dreaminess, and as he rode he began thinking in the ironic glow that always followed what some men called mercy. To kill a man like Clay was a service to most men, but it was only another service or disservice to a man that he did not like. In the case of Logan whom he had long studied, killing would not be measurable: it was nothing. His mind felt quieter than usual, and he began to think of Clay. He planned to come on him by morning; no man could keep pace with himself for long. At midnight he would feed and water the horse in the hills, and by sunup he would be near the pass, in the narrow throat where Clay, tired and unsuspecting, would have rested and eaten. Trailing Clay, a man less predictable, more deadly than Logan, gave him a direction, somewhere to go; but it was only another road that led where he had already come, to the single dearth where he was, at least, no slave, no fool. Beneath the hardness of his sinews he was always aware of a pointlessness like night, and he felt himself becoming more interested now in this duel against silence and aloneness than in overtaking Clay before he reached the pass—there seemed nothing ahead or behind him. In a flush of irony he laughed aloud and flicked his spurs against the straining groin of the horse. He began to whistle

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a tune that had followed him somewhere, something sweet with mockery, like lightning on a hot summer sky.

Weep all ye little rains,
Wail winds wail

He rode on and on through the darkened hollow, half thinking, half reflecting. Again he felt the past rise up in flashes; and the dark places, unknown, were still there: the one moment mainly that he could not place in time, when he stood alone, knowing that God was not there, that there was only dearth and dust in the skies, and that a man was better dead, and if he lived, self-success was all he could live for. But there was not even then any choice—he could not kill himself, because that would be to lose the unforgiveness.

He remembered feeling it all along, but he had not always known what it meant. Failure ran men's lives—it was their pain, their joy. As a boy he remembered watching from the shadows of wagons as the tall girls and drunken men danced and revelled round the bonfires, and he did not hate them, but felt only a mixed contempt and sorrow which made him unwilling to approach them. And he began to be alone. He could not understand failure—or rather he understood it too well. He saw it everywhere—the feverish wish for forgiveness on a young wife's face as she danced with her husband after going down on her back to a trader for a bolt of linen, men on their knees asking God to forgive them their failures; failure was all they knew. He understood that they, all of them, expected it of him too...until they were surprised and cowed by his rifle. Then it was as if he became a God in their eyes; they wanted kindness, pity at his hands who could have none for himself. He became ice: he knew he was cruel, but he was ice. There was no place where he belonged. But he did not care; pride and a sense of being always alone, even in the midst of people, were all that gave him peace. He had never hated anyone enough to hurt him—but he was in the world alone. He took Audrey away from her husband and others too he had taken away; his hands had built the ranch out of plunder and what men relinquished to him. He became quieter, more intelligent than they and stronger, as subtle as Logan. Men who were afraid of the silence and the empty spaces welcomed him, made room for

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him and crowded round him. But he wanted none of their attention —he was past needing it, almost past noticing it.

Ira woke as if from a forgotten revery to feel the brush of stunted trees against his thighs. Unwearied, though hungry, he looked up at the new moon that had just scaled the mountain peaks and revealed, for an instant, a hazy, wild, dreamy catamount of snow. He saw it then but as a trick of his mind, and his habitual expression, half melancholy, half amused, yet empty of feeling, did not change.

As he rode in deep concentration it was much later. The moon had risen over the white wastes of scrub-oak and he saw the snow—deep mysterious snow that led upward and outward in queer riddles of depth and height. Alertness spread in his mind. As he looked around, it was only another place that did not belong to him or match his needs, but he saw that he must think afresh to fathom it and keep the trail. The horse had eaten, but its trail-weary legs were unsteady, spindling; it would never be a good horse again. He began to ease its pace in order that it might not founder.

As he rode up the mountainside, he could see nothing but the many dimensionless white slopes on every hand. It was not until some time later that the horse bore him staggering against one huge white pinnacle which he had taken for shoulders of a bluff, and he discovered that it was a tree, its branches strung with snow-crystals and chains of ice. It came as a wry surprise to him, as if a cunning hand had thrown a guise among things. He felt the cold now, the air wore a new bleakness and was still: it did not break or swerve as silence would do—it was everywhere. The mountains in winter were not new to him, but there had been a change everywhere after a month of blizzards. In some way he felt drawn to it—as if it were what his own imagination had built, while at the same time he foreknew the grave difficulty.

After a while in a gesture of contempt against the cold he bent over the lurching horse to find the whiskey canteen; he had felt it against his thigh a few moments earlier. But he found he could not locate it; there was only the spur of leather where it had always hung. The loss brought a small pulse of rage within him who usually felt no anger. He rode onward into the puzzling dark, thinking of it, finally recalling what he should have known, that

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an hour or more ago he had dropped the empty jug into the trail. But for some time, he did not know what to make of the lapse of memory. It had not happened to him before; and he felt an influence in the night that he could not fathom. He began to try to think through it, but the nearest he could come was an idea similar to being lost; he was not lost, but somewhere a stage between where the familiar became harmful beyond recognition. He was bothered by two things that had passed quickly between him and the real, a shadow of forgetfulness and a shape of anger.

For a long time Ira rode upward into the dark cold with a certain new interest in it, the same content, into the small hours of what was somewhere the morning. He had reasoned that it would be three hours before the first streak of dawn and four before the sun arose. He saw that the path was deeper in snow now and wider, and it was very dark: he could not see the prints of Clay's stallion, only the white corpses of trees or boulders on the dimensionless slopes. His hands felt speared with cold; suddenly he rammed them into the wings of his jerkin. It was his habit to think always of his hands first, since they were himself; they made him somewhat different from the sum of things he did because the hands had never been tired—they could do more. He stared ahead into the crater of darkness. In the half jesting quietness of his mind there was no touch of anxiety; but he noticed that what had seemed new to him did not become old. It was a world of blizzards; it changed, altered, yet stayed the same. The white slopes threw off new upheavals of depth; the horse plunged by turns, thigh-deep in what seemed a rapid river of snow, then trod lightly through a dust of frost like fine and static hail. In the dispassion of his mind, he felt how the shifting and shuttling went on, and yet there was no place where change began or ended. He was no stranger to it, yet he felt already a small area of weariness and blankness in his mind where the image of the snow lay, though even this was something he had been awaiting.

Hours later he rode into the pass. He had ridden long as into a dream, but now day opened, light by light. First there was a winter glow which seemed to rise upward from the ice and frost as much as downward from the arisen sun, and then the single form of the snow, without object or source. Ira, viewing it, flexed his tireless body in the saddle while he fought the blue sea of cold.

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He had won through, beaten Clay to the pass. But as he looked at it, he felt some change in his relation to it—something he could do nothing about.

What had seemed in the darkness dimensionless was not: it was mass—a continuous white maze which was measureless, cold and serene with shining light. Beneath him there was the ice-flown river, now far extended over its habitual banks by the blockades below, the ice blueish along the banks below the falls where the river still flowed, stormed, around the blockades, sending up a volume of motionless sound between a roar and a sigh, and yet remaining mirrored beneath the ice. As he sat there, the daylight shone only on snow-fast pines and bushes, joined and flexed together in a stiff drifted membrane of snow. In the glare something held him as if entangled, caught, in the frozen flux, and his mind seemed suddenly small—there was nowhere an object in all that space where his gaze could settle and rest. Quickly, Ira recognized a terror: it stood off somewhere behind the spell of whiteness—it was something pure or something vicious, either one past thought. But as he felt it, he was prepared; he knew it would not turn him back—until he killed the one man he might ever want to kill, a lean, skilled betrayer, the man who was always free, innocent, for whom there was always a better place to go.

For a while he sat the shuddering horse motionless—it whinnied once in weariness and despair—and he began slowly to think how when Clay arrived he could see him approach in the frost-light before they came face to face. Looking down, he noticed that his hands were turning blue, and he struck them in a pain and a touch of grief that were new to him and rubbed them viciously on his leather jerkin to erase the feeling. Some second sense told him then that he would have to go up what seemed to be a cliffside above the falls in order to see into the distance.

He spurred the horse, and it launched upward beneath him in a last burst of speed. It gained the rock-cliff on slithery legs, and then, before any heed returned to him, started to sprawl headlong on the ice.

For a long minute, they were poised there; the horse beneath him sprawling back and forth in terror—long enough for him to think and look downward over the cliff and outward into space. He saw thirty feet below the ice-choked river, frozen hard in

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the middle in an ice-cage, with the blueish film along its sides where the ice was thin, diaphanous, and the deep water roiled. Then, as he flipped his powerful body free of danger, the horse's huge haunches struck him by chance, and he toppled over the falls.

When he sat up immediately on the ice-cage, he heard the river flowing on all sides and beneath him, and looking up with measured slowness he saw that the horse was gone from the cliff-side. His back was wrenched and one arm stunned, and he rubbed them a moment while his concentration flowed back. He knew somehow that he had fallen into disaster.

Nothing had changed, and yet as he crouched on his knees, there was nothing the same. Everywhere around him, but now apart from him, was the diaphragm of the snow-fast woods, broken only somewhere by a green smear of myrtle or mistletoe, the snow depending from each branch, each crevice in the stone in one cohesive rage. He knew he was left alone on an island of ice. He felt, at first, no anger or grief, only a kind of pain; with the passage of all certainty, only a stab of awe. He sensed that he was trapped, but he had been trapped before and had escaped through a working on the minds of weaker men who were more eager to believe than to know. But he knew now that he was alone. There was nobody out there. What he had seen from the cliff was open country, and far in the distance, on the plains, having turned back, was the figure of Clay and his horse.

For a time he crouched there looking at the flowing water beneath the thin blue scale of ice, swept clean of snow, on all sides of the ice-cage. It half isolated him from the peaks and flutes of snow, but it gave him this view of that forest of snow, as of a separate world, sparse and shining, and cut off from him, as if painted there. The morning dew was descending in frost particles that bit his cheeks and fixed to his skin-cap and clothes. He struck his wrists, but the frost-particles would not brush off—they clung to him like iron flakes. He felt he had to think, but he knew that thinking was vain. He was reluctant to face the river which he knew was impassable, knew by the breadth and the rush of the water under the thin ice, by the high, sheer cliffs rising over it.

He arose to his feet, his shoulder taxing him, and began to

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search himself for equipment; he had his Bowie knife, a cartridge belt but no gun, a piece of strong cord, and flints for lighting—but there was nothing around him to kindle. He took the items from his pocket and heaped them slowly with some great care or patience in the glistening frost, delaying until the last moment any consideration of fording the stream. He tramped hard and saw that the ice was deep. After a long time, he realized that he could dig a shallow trench in it, deep enough to get out of the wind, and his expression became cool, impersonal with irony.

Then he turned almost angrily to look down at the river. His slowed reason told him that in time the ice-cage would melt, but that was months away. There was too much water, too much speed in the water for the ice to freeze over so that he could walk across it. He knew suddenly that his nearest chance lay in swimming the river.

Slowly, he looked at it. The river groped in identical forks of equal width about the ice-cage, while before him were the falls. On each side there were rock walls silvered over with snow, nearly too steep for climbing even if he managed to swim through the ice and gain the cliff. He tramped down to the edge of the thin ice. Kneeling he thrust his weight down until the ice trembled far out, cracked, and splintered into fragments like thin glass which thrust up sharp gleaming points before disappearing in the revealed torrent. He touched the water. How swift? His hand, touching it, was thrust aside. How deep? He did not have to guess—the water was clear: six feet or more down. Then he bent and ran his thumb along the sill of ice—it was not quite an inch thick, more or less in spots. His head would go beneath the ice-surface, but he would break through again as he swam amain. His head would break through, and the ice would quickly slit his throat—it would carve out his eyes and bite into his brain. And even if he reached the wall, there was no place to stand to fix the rope for ascent, with eyelids frozen closed and body hacked and broken.

He thought of it for a long time. He knew he did not fear the risk of death. But he feared something else: the slow disfigurement of his body, the minnows sucking at a random dismembered arm or hand. Yet even if he had not feared this, it was not his way to consider certain death.

He stood up, his senses shaken partly free of the single mem-

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brane of snow and frost across in the woodlands. After all his wandering, he had come to a place that held him, which was no place at all. Standing there, he felt no self-pity; life and death had long been too simple to him for that. Yet something inside him could not shun the lengthening shadow of time that faced him.

He stood a long time motionless—more time than he, at first, knew—until his mind suddenly grasped and held it all: the unspeakable. Then he knew that he would have to work fast against it.

Bending down, he picked up the knife, as if his first purpose—to dig a trench—were the only real one. He went quickly to his knees and drew with the cold blade a six-by-three box in the ice. Quite suddenly, as he began working, he felt himself sinking into a limitless personal revery, something that wanted not to know. Looking up, he saw only the towering cliffs, the unanswering steeples of snow. For an instant only, he had forgotten where he was. He dropped the knife and leaned hard for an instant on his palms in the chipped and powdered ice, until the palms were like fire and the little pains worked far up his wrists.

Time passed; there was no movement anywhere in the snow-fast woods or on the cage other than his own, yet much time had passed for him. He finished digging a narrow bed in the ice where his body could drop and the cold wind and mist could not strike him. He lay down in it to rest, his cold impersonal face looking up at the sky, no longer the sky of dearth, but a sky of ruse and cunning. As he lay there, the silence, the trap, the shape of death, were things he had to face without hope of conquest, but could not countenance without hate, and he had never hated what was real, only what was not. He felt his mind crawl, seeking escape. He had known it was too much. He lay still, clinging both to himself and the unchanging scene which seemed in some way also within him, though untouchable. Time left a gap. Then the cold fine-spun revery began. He saw John Stein lying dead on the floor the night of the silver robbery; and Audrey's husband, Bill Mack, a bull of a man, who had come for his wife, sitting with broken hands and broken face after the fight, weeping for shame and loss: he heard his own ironic half-sorrowing laughter and saw Audrey's flesh shining through her nightgown in

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the next room. They were the sad things, and to his half waking mind they were not real; shadows only, as people were, they grew deep in his mind and clustered without love, beneath memory. He remembered no love; he did not want it for himself since he had seen in it the elements of need and pity. Yet he remembered Audrey and her bitter laughter, because she was all that love was not. He felt his memory of these personal things become deeper, something between dread and assurance, shutting off somehow the deluge of snow.

The long day-dream stopped. He was cold and alone, the sky was greying with snow. Then something moved. A lone eagle flapped out of the fixation of snow and tramped skyward, drifting out of view. It was an arresting and painful sight which at first he did not wish to believe. Gone now—the solitary live thing—it signalized more perfectly his isolation. He was going to die. Unless the ice froze deeper in a few days, he would freeze or starve or drift into madness. He knew he had to have comfort and food. Now.

Ira pulled himself lurching out of the trough in the ice and tramped in converging circles until he felt warmer. Then he went down to the water where he had broken the ice and knelt. Looking down he could see a school of little fishes deep in the shadows of the rocks. He bent down and plunged hand and arm in to the shoulder, groping with numbed fingers in the rock crevices. The little fishes only sank beyond reach in the swift water and fanned their tails while their icy eyes scrutinized his fingers. He withdrew the hand slowly and looked down at it, a numbed blue thing with not much more feeling or use than a gourd. He struck the hand savagely, finding an object for rage, until the blood pounded red and the fingers were alive again. Looking down at the hand, his eyes were crisp with melancholy and hatred. As he remained motionless, watching the little fishes, they seemed to become more real to him than anything else, than himself, because he must have them to live—and yet they were something like a dream.

Time was measured only by the sun—past meridian and deep in what elsewhere would have been mid-afternoon. He had been sitting for a long time with his knife, the cord, and a piece of skin cut from the tail of his jerkin, patiently, carefully making

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a seine for the fishes. As he worked, he felt how he had salvaged pride again: he was himself again, and he felt he had something to pit against the silence, the membrane of snow, and the ice-cage—his strength, his memory, or something else, a newness in him born out of prolonged unsorrowing awareness. He had shrunk in the last five hours—he was smaller than he had known, less powerful against the throat-cutting ice, but he had more skill than it, more heart even than the fishes. As in the past he had pitted himself against men, divining weakness, now he had begun to measure himself against the smallest things, stones, a piece of cord, minnows, and a small seine.

He finished with the seine, and stood in the blue cloud shadows fastening it. He felt very hungry, now that hunger was past meaning. He fitted the seine over his thumb in a finger-stall, so that it resembled the loose fin of a fish or the web-foot of a fowl. Then he got up, hurried to the hole in the ice, and lay down on his belly. Fitting the seine, he thrust his arm down. He trapped five minnows. He raised the seine carefully and emptied the minnows on the ice beside him. Three were very small, not more than a mouthful, but two were large, three mouthfuls apiece. He needed at least fifteen fishes to keep his strength up. So he dipped again, spreading the seine and closing it in crab-like movements. In three dips he caught twenty fish as his skill increased. Then he dried the seine on the ice by rubbing it hard enough to shed the water. Without getting off his knees, he began to cut the heads from the fishes and to swallow them like raw eggs. He felt the last wriggle of one fish deep in his guts, and a well of comfort seemed to open its edges into which his mind, tired, unheeding, and thankless, sank. Looking up, he saw that the snow-packed clouds were ranged closer, greyer, and a slow hope of change dawned in his mind.

Then it was night, quite suddenly as if he had not waited, and the snow so long withheld was falling over him. Lying in the shallow scooped-out ice, he looked up at the night, sleepless with the cold that blew on the set reticence of his mouth. Tongues of cold worked up into his back or shoulder, and he had to turn from side to side. The sky was soft as black fur and the fluffy white snow dropped like ornate flowers out of it, smiting his face with touches like unwished kisses, until he would finally

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have to drag his sleeve up over his eyes and mouth. The cold was partly broken by the snow; it was a mild deceptive cold now: sometimes he half forgot how chill his hands were, especially the one hand, the fishing-hand, which had grown tender as a woman's. He lay imagining without belief that when the sky cleared a terrific cold would come; it would dry up the springs higher up in the mountains, and he would walk out freely over the ice. Day-dreaming, partly comforted, he watched the snow; but the pointless place within him glimmered, some part of his mind (he seemed to know) that had led him here—unlike Clay who had turned back—among mountains of ice. Loneliness did not enter him: he knew he did not want the company of men. What he knew he knew well: that there was no comfort in men. He remembered no man or woman who could look life in its face as he had done. Now, in his day-dream that was far from sleep, he began to remember: John Atherton who rode beside him on more than one raid, a boy of seventeen with grave girl's eyes, who worshipped him, who on the night after a bitter day was sent up as lookout and fell in with Ruby McHayes, the marshal's son, and agreed to lead McHayes and two others to where Ira slept, to receive in return the sum of one thousand dollars in gold and title to a small ranch McHayes owned. Something wakened Ira in time to see the three of them clustered off in the shadows, and he opened fire; the men ran off in panic, leaving John Atherton behind. He let him go—his hands became useless against him. But he was fascinated by what he had found, not the boy's love overcome, but the fear of himself that he had discovered in an instant of grief.

When his revery ended, the snow had already quit. Fitful as a dream it had not lasted long—not long enough to do anything any good or to alter the night. Down the clear skies came the slow mirror of stars, and he lay once again empty of hope, his hands bitten by the random snow-flakes, feeling the soft smudge of pain—chilblains—on one cheek beneath the harsh yellow growth of beard. He lay still in the habitual and hardened grace of his mind, waiting for nothing.

At dawn he awakened from a broken sleep. It was keenly cold and clear, like yesterday. For the first time a shadow of weariness crawled along the lines of his mouth, striking his eyes. Standing up, without awareness of motion, he saw that the snow lay now

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on the thin sheets of ice, but he saw the same moist spots where the roiling water bubbled through. Hungry again, with but five fishes to eat, he turned slowly and walked down to the hole in the ice. A very thin tier had formed over it. He cracked it with a touch of his toe. Across in the woods, as yesterday, the chain of snow and frost leagued tree and bush and twig in the soundless white flux, until as he stood there, he felt himself begin to sink at last into that attitude, that long chain without memory.

Then, abruptly, he saw a strange sight. Three deer, lovely as fauns, were tippling in the water near the falls overhead. How long they had been there without his seeing them he did not know. Their eyes upon him were brighter than oak-leaves, dense with beauty. Arrested, drawn slowly from out some void, he stared upward at them. As time passed, the deer that wore the ten-pointed antlers lifted its slender distant head skyward and led the herd back into the forest, while he stood rooted, viewing the procession. He felt nothing of mockery in them: they would perish as soon from the cold as himself. The ten-pointed stag waited, however, until the does had all passed on beyond the snow barriers. Finally, he tossed his helm against the white brake and disappeared.

Then fatigue, astonishment, and the wreakage of a brief hope touched him deeply. A mist of horror and want welled and froze in his eyes.

After a while, he was himself again—a dreaminess inside him where the hate and pride waited—a new even smaller self, kneeling with the seine at the hole in the ice, thrusting his arm into the ice-water. But he had not forgotten the deer—they would not leave his mind. As he worked without much success, watching the scrutiny of the minnows as they darted below, in and out of shadows, he would stop to pound his frozen hand back into sensitivity and munch at the five dead fishes. As the sun rose, the lonely eagle rose again from his rock-nest and tramped skyward and disappeared as before, leaving the air trackless, insane, perfect. As he worked, he felt desire rise and hurt him—oddly, because he had never founded a habit with women, it seemed that all he wanted in earth or sky was the shape of a woman near. Looking down at his hand passing through the water, he thought of woman not only as flesh and as food, but as the only escape. To die lying with a woman in his arms was all that he seemed to want. He felt a hate for the slimey chaste

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minnows, with a flesh not his own. There was something warmer and richer about a woman than even the female deer in the dawn. Not their bodies—he did not want to think of their bodies, sow-white, less lovely than the deer's. It was something else. He could not think what it was—in the past he had never noticed.

He chewed the minnows this time, bone and false flesh, eight of them slowly, so they would digest. Then he drank long from the chill water, and rubbing the numb hand went to sit alone on the ice. His hands were empty now, useless: they did not seem strong with potential. There was an enormous space between them; he felt as if the sky or the earth were thrust between them. He found himself clenching and unclenching them, but the sense of immensity remained. He knew quickly that he had to do something. So he began thinking how to build an ice-house in which to live. As he sat in the silence, his thoughts seemed to rush out to some sphere which was bereft either of ideas or objects. Finally he rose in a calm bitterer than fear and began to hunt for his knife in the snow.

As he labored, day passed—it was night, and slow keen dawn with no interval of snow this time and no sense of time now except for the rough-hewn blocks of ice flanking the narrow groin of the bed. He heard the water seethe and boil under the thin ice, and as he seined, he saw the deer on the cliffside—four of them with one buck, lissome and grave, lovelier than the dawn. They had come again, as if to remind him of time and of flesh. As they drank at leisure, they gazed at him with the fullness of their eyes. Then they filed back with the same eloquent calm, the roe leading, into the membrane of snow. He felt how they left in their wake a dust in his mind like an interrupted dream in which he saw rows of cankered flowers, white bones, dead leaves, the waste of things.

As he worked, he sometimes spoke aloud now, without caring, small urgent words addressed to the seine, the sun, the water, or the little fishes. He felt very hungry. But this time he caught no fishes: they scrutinized him but kept away in the shadows of the rocks, their sucking mouths mocking him as they fed on roots and lichen. His hand stone-cold, he had to stop. He noticed keenly that the hand felt different now, as if smeared with nitre. Yet in a way he could not think or worry about it: it only seemed to reveal the truth. He got up, sleep-walking, and going back

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fell face-down on the ice. He lay there, sprawled and motionless, his mouth pressed hot and hard on the ice. He had failed. He could not cry or pray: he merely seemed to give up with a terrible effort something about himself that was important—hope. Time passed. Then he rose and felt refreshed, and he began to work with narrow quiet effort on the escarpment of ice.

As he cut and hewed with the dulling knife, without any feeling of pride in the work, he began to think again. It was both thought and revery. He knew he had some need of objects to think with, need of at least a scheme or a hope of one. But such things had become madness to his mind. He had begun to think without these things, with nothing but the blank backdrop of snow—but his mind felt clumsy and slow: he had begun to think of certain ideas, not known or recognized before, ideas that rose to take the place of people, caused by people though there were no people in them, like a plant risen from seed. The ideas made no sense to him: people were full of deceit and cruelty, worse than himself, because he knew his nature and was—had been—faithful to what he knew. But he felt there was no use remembering that—it was past and he would not live beyond a few days: he had to think and he had to think through ideas and persons, and the ideas were never inside the persons and the persons were never inside the ideas. This he had always known, but he had not understood that the ideas could not last beyond the memory, the people.

Last night late, half asleep, he began imagining to himself a place where there were cool summery trees, a long lake shadowy in the afternoons, and a house with a stone well. It meant nothing to him—yet pleasure arose as he began to add things to the place, using this and casting out that. It was strange how little he chose. He discovered that one thing he wanted there besides the well was a boat and a fishing-line: the boat had waxen oars and the fishing line would not sever. He did not want a gun, oddly he did not want a horse—in this place he did not want a woman. There were no people there. It was a strange idea: it was terribly real to him, and yet he knew it did not exist. In all his life he had never found any place that was his, that suited him alone, like this.

Then his knife slipped and he cut his palm, slit it so that the veins opened. He got up, lurched up drunkenly with the blood trailing down, cursing in calm fury and despair. When he finally got his hand into the ice-water it stopped bleeding instantly, and when he took it out, it felt already healed. Surprised, yet

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somehow willing to believe, as even the real, the evil nature of things, had fluctuated, he went back to work, while the skies glowed again grey with a with-held and nearly imaginary snow.

Then it was night again. In the groin of the ice now worn smooth by the passage of his body, he lay in gaunt sleeplessness, looking with hollow eyes from side to side at the chiseled masonry of ice that surrounded him. It was warmer now in the ice-bed—his hands and chilblained cheek would let him sleep if sleep came. But as he lay looking at what his hands and skill had done, seized out of the mouth of death, the masonry of ice seemed almost more grotesque than the ice-cage, the thin crust of ice over the rushing deep water, and the membrane of snow that nature had fashioned out of forests. He felt no joy in the work, and his mind heavy with sleeplessness and deep with yearning turned back into the daydream: the long lake, the sandy shoals, the boat, the lighted house, himself and silence. By night the night-owls came, flapping at his windows, by day the starlings scattering sound. Many kinds of insects browsed among the dragonflies on the surface of the lake: it was a place of much small-life. But among the shores was a herd of twenty deer. Sleeping or awake, he had begun to feel the necessity of this place. He remembered that even before evening he had lain down in the groin of ice and closed his eyes, thinking of it.

He fell into a deeper dream which was sleep, but the sound of a snow avalanche on the hills awakened him. He lay remembering the dream. Men and women of all kinds were searching for him everywhere, as they had once searched: they chased him out of a hotel (it seemed to be, but was not, Audrey's hotel, where he was least secure) and into the forests through tall trees until he came suddenly. . .where? Nowhere, nowhere at all. To that place in his mind. He lay deep in discouragement and shame because it seemed that he had been running from them all this time. Deep in fatigue, he realized finally that it was only a harrowing dream; but he felt he could not shake free of its power. He got up, standing in the vacant shell of the starless night, and dipped his face in the cold water to rid the dream. He wished he were dead. As he stumbled back, it seemed to him that a man—a dying man—who wanted only to dream had no business with even a few days of life. But he had no hope of dying.

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Awakened by the dawn, he did not rise. He lay with the crimson hush over him without wishing to eat or work or see the fallow deer in the snow. Yesterday he had remarked the leanness of the deer, how their skeletons shone through the bronze coats: he felt he did not want to see them leaner or hungrier or not at all. He did not want to see the eagle tramp up the skies, forever free, or hear the chatter of the invisible horde of chipmunks. He believed he had already struggled longer than most men would have done. He wanted only silence.

But he felt he had some shadow of choice. His strong lean face was already hollowed; the yellow beard soiled by the entrails of fish lay like haircloth on the chilblains of his cheeks. He stood up over the ice-walls, feeling his sole solitary motion, and looked up at the falls: there were no deer, but he saw the familar mud-stains in the snow. They would be pierced with the need for salt now; like himself they could exist but not live long. He thought how winter—the pure thing—was too strong for deer or men, until through habit or craft they learned how to conceal themselves from it. He was bemused by his own thoughts, the qualities in them, the lack of object. As he stood there thinking this way, he felt the utter truth: that for the deer, death and life, the impure design, did not fit what they were. They were braver than either: they laid their slender necks down, at last willingly, upon the gibbet of frost. With him it was the same, yet harder. He did not fit any idea, and he was always changing—what he thought or believed was not what he was. To fit death, part of him had to die first; then death could hold the rest, the nerve, the instinct. It would take prolonged nightmare to rid him of all the rest, before he could lay his head down. . .

It was noon. There was a crescent of sun overhead. He looked up, surprised again, to find himself still alive at the end of some stage in time. He had finished the walls and eaten fifteen half-live fishes; he ate them slowly and lingered over them, half studying the stubborn life in them. But by this time, he had already made the discovery. The fishing-hand did not now resemble the other hand (the one he had cut), but was a strange hectic blue-red with a kind of grey fur on it around the wrist-bone. Looking down at it, he saw beneath the quicks of the nails little moons of grey matter. For a long time after he noticed it, he sat still on the

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ice—time leaped, and he could not tell where it went. He felt no surprise or dismay—for a while, no feeling at all.

Finally, he looked at the hand, judging its chance and rate of survival, seeing for the first time what dying would do. Then pity swarmed over him. He felt he would not give much for the chances of the hand beyond a day or two. He knew he would have to make for it a dry leather mitten, cutting it out of some warm part of his jerkin.

Then, without moving or thinking, he began timelessly to fashion the mitten. It was the hardest thing he had ever done because the hand was too stiff and clumsy to help its neighbor. As he worked, bent over, chill sweat broke on his face, and he noticed that there was a pulpiness there in his palm, plump without feeling, like a frost-melon. Suddenly his work slowed, and he noticed the enormous space between his hands: he felt himself teetering on some verge of immensity.

A few instants later, as he knelt there, he knew that he could not live with the hand: it was death joined to his life.

After the discovery, he felt free of the burden of hope or pride. He rose calmly and walked slowly around the ice-cage, without shrinking from the view of the snow-valanced woods beyond the strips of water, hearing without emotion the roar and hiss of the cataracts beneath the falls. The day felt like all the others, too real, and himself too visionary, too quiet and small. In the face of this fact, it seemed he could ask nothing, expect nothing. His lips parted, and he laughed at himself in single scorn; mocking himself, he stood at the brink, fondling with hatred the dying hand. He thought suddenly: should something happen and the ice freeze he would not know whether to walk across it or not. Would it be worth the effort to know? Was he worth the agony of dying? If there was a God, which he had never believed, a God of dearth and plenty, Who counted the little fishes he ate and those he vomited, He would have to believe a man worthy of the agony, which he was not, never could be. Ira remembered how the other, fair, hand had been healed, the left hand, the lesser one.

He was struck by a fear of his own bright thoughts; yet they seemed to leap inside him. He knew suddenly that he had always seen too much to accept any one man's faith, that he had felt lifelong sadness and rage that had fed the body and will, made either one strong to surfeit. And he asked himself, what

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else was there for them to feed—now or then or ahead of him? There was excitement, accomplishment, admiration, schemes to lay. There were all these things, and there was nothing. Nothing at all. Standing exhausted, looking down sightlessly at the mittened hand, he realized this viewpoint; but it was already useless to him, and it was somehow behind him like a dead skin. He looked down at the bloated hand and water came and stood in his eyes. Brokenly, he looked into the afternoon. In the spires of the trees snow glistered like tiny stars—clouds bearing snow trafficked overhead and dwindled to opal grey. A solitary crow sat on the windless air northward like an ibis. He turned to hunt the knife where in his panic he had left it.

Beyond the bizarre ice-wall he found the knife, blade buried. He clutched it, but he could not bring himself to use it. The casual cold and the misty sun seemed not to watch him, not expectant, and to act was not to find quittance from these. He mocked himself again, with bitter cruelty, knowing it was not enough. Even the crow had vanished, probably crop-full with gobbets from a deer's leaner, fresher heart, or possibly it had been only a lonesome rook. Cruelty that mounted to irony inside him was all he had left. He felt he would have liked to justify the hollowness of his heart with the bitter glee of a rape or a killing. Soul-rotten, hand stinking, he stood in the sweet snow, feeling himself for what he was, for what all men had engendered in his blood.

Whirling, he knelt in the snow beside the water. But he only crouched there very still. It did not seem worthwhile to do it, for himself or any man. He shuddered and felt a passion for death, a wish for it, steal over him.

Possibly an hour later, half mad in mind, he waded through the snow on his knees to the buried knife. He plucked it out, gripped the useless throbbing fingers between his knees, and reaped the hand at the wrist, with giant, patient toil and hacking, splitting blows. Then while consciousness remained and while foils of onrushing blackness stained the snow, he wound the loose flesh and cord over the stump of wrist and tied the slip-knots with his teeth. Even now, he did not know why he had done it. On his back in the ice before all brightness fled, he drew over the wound the mitten he had made.

An hour later, between savage pain and forgetfulnesss, he

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dragged himself to the water, washed the clout of flesh and bone until the cold stopped the bleeding, re-tied the slip-knots, and wound over it the piece of his shirt. He finished with it, his mind slipping quickly backward into a hovering nightmare; as he got to his feet, stumbling toward the ice-bed, it leaped and seized his brain.

It was twelve hours later when his head cleared. But he had lain a long time struggling as the nightmare slowly withdrew out of the pits of his eyes. He sat up shocked, half aware of his motions, one hand already searching, to find himself lying by the hole in the water where another inch would have spelt drowning, looking up into another new dawn, in some way forgetful of the death that had for a while shared his mind. He sat erect, nearly dreaming, the crown of his head damp with the slush that had revived him. He felt how the fever had left him what seemed a soft nest of flesh without inwardness, and hunger and thirst had pierced deeper than desire. He recalled a madness, a stalking like a bear, monstrous around the lair of ice, before his senses were shrived. But he knew it was past now. The hand was all right—it was gone and the dry pain was harsh but such as might be endured. What was past seemed now deeply past—so that as he staggered up, he had lost part of what he had been. It was gone, transfigured, like the dead hand.

He simply stood looking narrowly into the sunrise. As his sight cleared, he saw that the deer had left their tracks and gone. But as he looked more carefully, he saw lying on the snow of the high clearing, yet very near him, a beautiful doe, her sides still seeming to quiver with departed life. It was at first too real to understand. Then it hurt him so that he went weak at the knees. Beautiful and full of impulse, she lay on the scaffold of snow, unknowable and without peers. Moments later he did not know the meaning. He could not tell if his ascription of beauty to the dead doe was born out of his mind as a need for food, or not. But there had been a perfection about his feeling that left him, whoever he had become, real.

Turning, he saw the dead lump of hand, pale green in the fresh fluff of snow like the claw of an otter, and veering slightly, he picked it up and dropped it down to the little fishes. Then he knelt again beside the water and drank from his other palm. Patiently, he bathed the wound, applying new cloth, all that

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remained of his shirt. Irony was gone in him, as he fitted the bloody mitten to his single hand and crouching again began searching the shadowy, porcelain rocks for the small fishes.

After the exertion and the nausea of chewing the minnows, he vomited and lay in the shell of ice, too weak to move. In his mind there was something like a bridge of dreams, necessary and real, flowing inward from what was not himself, then through himself to some stage beyond either. First, gusts of fever would return, lasting perhaps ten minutes at a time, in which the clarity of a wide suffering in which he only shared, as one among many, and older and richer than himself, was broken by the final nightmare that awaited him certainly, at last, no matter how he strove or what he became. But the common nightmares were not strong now, only palls and threats and empty husks of the part of him that had lost identity—the overweening part; and the new feeling he had which was like mourning, like tragedy, chased and released itself again out of the nightmares. In the place in his mind, there were new forms of things, a beautiful deer without a herd (all the herd had vanished, as if he had asked too much even in this), and a quality that overhung the shadowed lake like peace.

Finally, he slept.

In the afternoon he dragged himself to the water again and fished with all the strength he had left, caught five large minnows, chewed and ate them. They stayed in his stomach, the fever had passed, and strength budded slowly. Bending beside the water, he knew by these signs that he would live a day, possibly a week, longer. Thinking began again, and now it had hardly any object by which to move. The thoughts settled in himself and there they lodged; they were short, new, and fresh.

Standing again, without hope, by the brim of water, he noticed the freshness, and how underneath it lay no melancholy or dread clustered beneath memory, and irony was something former, something dead. He stood a long while, aching and weary. He felt he had staked the hand against all the forces he knew, and had lost—or rather, he had surrendered it, given it up in order that he might know; both and yet neither. He noticed an odd completeness about the other hand now which had been absent in the two.

Freshness crowded his mind so that he turned toward the forests. He watched the newly arrived snowbirds flit aloft over

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the chains of hoar and frost, and revel at will near the fallen doe. His eyes became more grave, austere, as he pondered. If the snow came soon again in abundance, the body of the doe would escape the bills of the kites, and when Spring came, the grass would spring richer and more lush where she had lain, while his own body would be washed away in the thaws. He thought one would not know this country in the Spring, when the columbines set out their purple and yellow flags. These lovelinesses would hold his grief.

In the evening, heavy snow began. What had been moonlight was now a white cloud that covered his lonely body in the ice-trench. He lay wondering if the heavy cold would follow the snow and he would walk out alive, to last as long as he could with one hand. Then his mind turned to the secret place where there was, for him, Ira Fawley, forever, a lake and a house, forever the single deer.

Fever fits returned as he lay awake thinking. Suppose he escaped? He could not think what he would do, walking out over the solid ice up into the woods, where he would go or why. Clay had returned in despair to the ranch, seeking mainly forgiveness from himself who afar off had killed some men and plundered. It was as if Clay—all of them—had outlasted his will, and so outlived his ability to forgive or not forgive. This was the penalty: the past, and the fury in it, were dead to him. He was a man who had missed many chances, and all that he might have felt or done, the honor he might have paid to one woman, lay, as if in one gesture to a fallen doe. If he lived, by what means would he live? —he felt deep in a forgetfulness like sleep. Yet he knew that all things—even people—were before him, and nothing behind. In some way he had not even known who or what he was, from that moment when, full of longing for death, he had in some sudden fit of self-denial, raised the knife. It was because he knew he had not done it for himself; since he, himself, wanted and craved nothing but death, and not to be alive like this, maimed, with the past dead. But he had felt driven to it by some unaccountable love for the living bone, whether of people or of animals, which had been selfless then, but was now all of him that remained. He could not close his eyes, despite the comfort of the snow.

It was crimson dawn again, still as if enchanted. He lay broad

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awake, feeling the new shrill cold bite through the heavy skin jerkin as he wound the stump of the wrist in the mitten again and grunted and shivered with the renewed pain. He had not eaten in twelve hours or more, and he was still a sick man, nearer to death than ever. He could feel the nightmare waiting—something shapeless—slinking across the dark edges of his mind where there would never be light. But he did not hurry. He stood up in the frost-littered air, noticing that the bright high fluting of the river was quiet, a murmur under the level reaches of snow. Where the hole in the ice had been there was only a dip and a faintly moist slough. He took up his knife and the piece of cord and walked to the high edge of the ice-cage. Then he stepped out weakly on the river. The ice swayed, crackled, but did not give.

Finally, without danger, he dragged his body slowly atop the cliff and sat, expended, a few steps from where the rifle had dropped: it lay outlined beneath the snow. But he did not reach to seize it. Standing there, he began to think of building a cabin, some kind of lean-to shelter beneath a tree. As he looked up, he saw a late deer come out of the woods, standing in the lee beside the dead deer where the water-hole had been, and scent the air. It did not fly from him, though it looked toward him. It was the roe, the king-deer; suddenly in his wake came four, then five females and a young buck. His eyes were austere as he looked at them. The deer beheld him there a few paces from his rifle. They had not come to drink. He knew they had come to stand where the bitter snow was shallow, and out of the blade of the wind. They had come into his hands, since they knew him well, and the scent of him had become alike wild. Yet not merely this. He felt it now, though he was not gifted with the words: the hope that had been the gulf, the shadow, was traced there—the nature that seemed looking in his direction, at last without fear, not at him, but on through him (at least through him) saw itself whole again, alive. As he stood there, it seemed only a passing feeling, but it came to him in deep need, a first sign of the man he had become—awakening him to that succession of things in which he had, at some cost to himself, witnessed for man in death's hallows, while out of the pitchblack of memory came a recognizable source of light.

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WILLIAM STAFFORD

The Last Time

They headed toward the Platte, a lawn like Texas;
their chances every night were fair
when they let the campfires die and heard the miles lie down.
Above their need the quartering stars
began the hunt. Fall was in the air.

One night their blanket faces caught excitement:
snow across dark passes. Campfires ate
the promise wood. By dawn, evangelist,
the mountains reared—a map of winter,
a clear report: all peaks had surrendered.

By authority of space and silence General Miles
struck through deer trail amazement in pursuit
till scouts read snow by Cheyenne blood and heard
upwind the dying strike their wintry song
in the scenery of their fathers, their centuries' end.

Sunset: Southwest

In front of the courthouse holding the adaptable flag
Jesus will be here the day the world ends
looking off there into the sky-bore
past Socorro over sunset lands.

There will be torque in all the little towns,
wind will beat upon the still
face of anyone, just anyone,
who will stand and turn the still

Face to full dial staring out there
and then the world will be all—
the face hearing only the world
bloom from the eyes, and fall.

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The Tillamook Burn

These mountains have heard God;
they burned for weeks. He spoke
in a tongue of flame from sawmill trash
and you can read His word down to the rock.

In milky rivers the steelhead
butt upstream to spawn
and find a world with depth again,
starting from stillness and water across gray stone.

Inland along the canyons
all night weather smokes
past the deer and the widow-makers—
trees too dead to fall till again He speaks,

Mowing the criss-cross trees and the listening peaks.

West of Your City

West of your city into the fern
sympathy, sympathy rolls the train
all through the night on a lateral line
where the shape of game fish tapers down
from a reach where cougar paws touch water.

Corn that the starving Indians held
all through the moons of cold for seed
and then they lost in stony ground
the gods told them to plant it in—
west of your city that corn still lies.

Cocked in that land tactile as leaves
wild things wait crouched in those valleys
west of your city outside your lives
in the ultimate wind, the whole land's wave.
Come west and see; touch these leaves.

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Ice-Fishing

Not thinking other than how the hand works
I wait until dark here on the cold
world rind, ice-curved over simplest rock,
where the tugged river flows over hidden
springs too insidious to be quite forgotten.

When night comes I plunge my hand
where the string of fish know their share
of the minimum. Then, bringing back my hand
is a great sunburst event; and slow
home with me over unmarked snow

In the wild flipping warmth of won-back thought
my boots, my hat, my body go.

Hail Mary

Cedars darkened their slow way
over the gravel in town graveyards
in places like we lived—Wichita, or Haven.

By themselves, withdrawn, secret little shadows
in their corners by the iron gate,
they bowed to the wind that noticed them,

Branches bending to touch the earth;
or night raised them to block the sun
with a thousand utterly weak little hands,

Reciting. They say candle-vigilant woods
in high Arizona swirl twisting upward
out of red dust miles of such emphasis,

Like them, dark by dark by dark.

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Willa Cather

Far as the night goes, brittle as the stars,
the icy plain pours, a wolf wind over it,
till white in the south plunge peaks with their cold names,
curled like wreaths of stone with blizzard plumes.
In the highway shed at Gray Bull the workers pause
and hear that wind biting their fences down,
scouring the land, as in early days the Sioux
with winter riding their backs in the folds of their robes
fled the White Father toward the Bitter Roots.

Over that shaking grass a thousand miles
where Spanish Johnny sang to the man he killed,
Nebraska, stretching, touched a continent
trying from the rock of Quebec to Santa Fe
for a certain humble manner of meeting the days:
cedars repeated themselves over the scarred ground,
surrounding with patience the Archbishop's garden;
a badger dug a den wisely; down in Shimerda's
dugout a face turned toward mesas and some still town.

That land required some gesture: conciliation.
A steady look from a professor's house
made the space of America slide into view
to press against the cheekbones all its wind
that carved the land for miles, and in the wind
an old man was calling a language he barely knew,
calling for human help in the wide land, calling
"Te-éach, te-éach my Ántonia"—
into all that silence and the judgment of the sky.

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ROY HARVEY PEARCE

On the Continuity of American Poetry

To the Memory of William Hildreth (1904—1954)

"He says No! in thunder; but the Devil himself can not make him say *yes*. For all men who say *yes*, lie; and all men who say *no*,—why they are in the happy condition of judicious, unincumbered travellers in Europe; they cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet-bag,—that is to say, the Ego."

How, and to what extent, has our history made our poetry?—or more precisely, made it possible for our poets to make our poetry? This is a question which we have lately again been much concerned to answer. The richest and most exciting answer we have been given, which shifts the basic terms somewhat, declares that myth has made our poetry and that history (social, economic, intellectual, linguistic, etc.) is in this case just a reductionist term for myth. Mythographic criticism would thus save our poetry (as it presumably would save any poetry) at once from pure (i. e., formalist) criticism and pure (i. e., departmentalized) history. This is not a small enterprise, to be sure; and it appears to have been a successful one. But somehow, so it seems to me, another, quite fundamental question has in the process not even been asked: How has our poetry made our history? The question can be put in other ways: What has our poetry's "use" been for us? What possibilities of the creative imagination has it manifested? What kind of understanding of our history has it made possible? What has our poetry been to us and we to it?

The following notes are meant to make a beginning toward answering such a question. They are intended to establish a working hypothesis as to the continuity of American poetry in the nineteenth century and beyond, and to suggest a way whereby we might see it as a whole—indeed, see its very wholeness. Establishing the pattern of continuity will in turn perhaps be a way

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of seeing what poetry has "done" in America—and so of becoming increasingly self-conscious of one aspect of our national self-consciousness. For surely the history that our poetry has made is the history of ourselves, or our consciousness of ourselves.

I

In Volume II, Book 1, Chapter 17 of *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville speaks thus of literature in the United States:

> Nothing conceivable is so petty, so insipid, so crowded with paltry interests, in one word so anti-poetic, as the life of a man in the United States. But among the thoughts which it suggests there is always one which is full of poetry, and that is the hidden nerve which gives vigour to the frame.

Then, a page or so later, he says explicitly what that thought is not and what it is:

> Among a democratic people poetry will not be fed with legendary lays or the memorials of old traditions. The poet will not attempt to people the universe with supernatural beings in whom his readers and his own fancy have ceased to believe; nor will he present virtues and vices in the mask of frigid personification, which are better received under their own features. All these resources fail him; but Man remains, and the poet needs no more.

What Tocqueville observes in this celebrated discussion is crucial to my hypothesis, and so I venture to convert it into two basic terms. (1) *An anti-poetic culture.* This, taking a metalinguistic leap, I would translate into: *An anti-poetic language*, since language makes immediately available the values and forms of culture. I thus take the passage to refer not only to the paucity of possible "subjects" for American poems, but also to the nineteenth-century American attitude toward poetry itself. This attitude too was expressed in the language which his culture gave the poet; it thus necessarily conditioned and qualified his discovery of a "subject." The second of my basic terms has to do with this problem of "subject." (2) *A putatively poetic conception of Man.* Here there is a certainty that in the (as yet perhaps unrealized) idea of Man there necessarily lies the prime source of poetry in America. Nothing else is available; but nothing else is needed.

Put together the two terms come to something like this: Man in America exists in spite of—as well as in terms of—the anti-poetics which the values and forms of his culture seem to have

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made inevitable. Here we must look for the full implications of Tocqueville's observations. We may note, if we assent to them, that for the poet there was the necessity of getting at and expressing the significance of Man in terms—language, the myriad aspects of culture it embodies, and the anti-poetic attitude it sets—which actively militated against the very existence of poems. The paradox is as total as paradoxes ever can be. And from the point of view of one who puts Tocqueville's observations together, as he doesn't quite, the burden on the poet theoretically was terrific, forcing him willy-nilly to work at his task as though it were that of breaking through the limits of his culture in order to make its very self-induced blindness to poetry a means to poetic insight. Through his own sense of the anti-poetic life of men in his society, he had to discover the poetic Man immanent in that life; he had to make Man not only a possibility but an actuality; as poet, he had virtually to create Man. He had to discover how the very qualities of that anti-poetic life, if they were fully comprehended, would be seen to derive from Man, Man who was poetry. He had to achieve, in the nigh-on-to obsessive word of the nineteenth (and perhaps the twentieth) century, a poetry of the Self. In his work, that self-consciousness which we take to be the universal mode of poetry had as its prime quality a consciousness of the self defined in terms of its ultimate resistance to consciousness of other selves.

The situation gave rise, in the writer who would be absolutely true to his vocation, to a private poetry aspiring to be universal, yet only on its own terms; an egocentric poetry which insisted that in its egocentrism lay its universality; a poetry which in looking deeply into—then often flouting or distorting or playing with—its culture's anti-poetic values, would make them over; a poetry of the self trying, by virtue of its very working as poetry, to universalize itself; a poetry of sudden break-throughs and brief consolidations, not of planned strategies and magisterial control; a poetry, as we have always claimed it to be, even when we have not been careful to define what we were claiming, "romantic" in its strength and in its weakness.

2

I shall treat as poets whose work variously manifests the principles I have sketched above: Poe, Emerson, Whitman, and

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Emily Dickinson. They are certainly our major nineteenth-century poets. And they are different enough one from another to manifest a creative uniqueness, an artistic greatness, without the existence of which there would be no point in trying to define what they have in common. For, if my analysis seems to take us away from their individuality, it is only so that we can eventually return to it, so as to know it more fully as a living historical possibility which bears immediately upon our existence in our time.

In what follows, I shall try to indicate how that uniqueness is in itself expressive of, among other things, what we can see now to be a necessarily analogous conception of the poet's and the poem's function, and how there is thus to be perceived a basic major American style—by which term I mean to include both the angle of vision and what is envisioned. I shall consider some of our poets' best (and most anthologized) works as a whole, without regard to its chronology. For it seems to me that the goal of a historian of a national imagination (or an aspect of it) must be to comprehend totally and conspectively the uniqueness of a series of styles conceived as variants on a basic style. It might even turn out that the poets owe as much to the basic style as they do to their own individual creative powers. But that is indeed a chicken-and-egg question which I dare only raise, expecting that theoreticians of culture will continue to be critically minded enough some day to help us answer it. My concern here will be to suggest, with the following brief, foreshortened analyses, how the uniquely variant styles of some of our major poets manifest their origins in that basic style which in turn makes for wholeness and continuity among them.

Poe is obviously the poet of dream-work. The very obviousness makes for a kind of over-insistence which to American readers at least must seem to be no less than vulgar. To recall the gross characteristics of Poe's poems: Metrical effects are forced until they become virtually hypnotic, and language is chosen primarily because it carries exotic, unworldly meaning, or can be made to do so. Thus in the opening lines of "The Sleeper":

At midnight, in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic moon.
An opiate vapor, dewy, dim,

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Exhales from out her golden rim,
And softly dripping, drop by drop,
Upon the quiet mountain top,
Steals drowsily and musically
Into the universal valley.

Here the effect is of a willed irrelevance to day-to-day reality. But we do sense the willed quality; and we are shocked into attention by it. What annoys us here (and the effect is everywhere in Poe's poems, even those with an ostensibly firmer argument) is that the poem seems to exist simply as an attention-getting device. Indeed, in some of his more ambitious criticism, Poe was in effect willing to settle on this as one of the chief aims of poetry. For what else is his inordinately technical criticism but an insistence that the poet mind his business, which was chiefly one of expressive technique?

Expressive of what? one now asks. And in the poems the answer would seem to be only expressive of itself, as expression. Here we must ask further what it meant for Poe to make poems whose sole strength consists in this extraordinary weakness. And we can view him as what he set out to be—a kind of culture hero of the imagination. His contemporaries would worry much lest life turn out to be an empty dream. And he would show how in dreams there was manifest the naked power of the imagination. It was, in point of fact, imaginative experience which Poe's anti-poetic society could make little use of—imaginative experience for its own sake, in belles lettres. As we have come to know, his society's "official" philosophy, Scottish Common Sense, put such a low valuation on the products of the imagination that they were granted a right to exist only in so far as they served practical, "social" ends. The critics and imaginative writers whom Poe battled were nursed on Blair's *Rhetoric*, or any of a number of versions and imitations of it. Poe battled them in his criticism, certainly; and in doing so, eclectically used any philosophical help he could find in his wide-ranging and, as it seems to me, quite superficial reading. But his principal weapon was his own genius and his devotion to the creative power, realizable in the supernally beautiful, that he knew to be beyond the ken of Common Sense and orthodox rhetoric.

It is tragic that his poems exist for us for nothing but their

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overinsistent exhibitions of the imagination indulging itself in demonstrations of its own power. But it is this fact, apparently, that helped French poets, not so sensitive to the vulgarities of that overinsistence as Americans can now be, write poems of a seriousness which Poe could not reach. Moreover, it is the fact of Poe's poetic gift which set the pattern of his fiction—with its concern to explore the delicately harrowing relations between the world of common sense and that of the dream. Because his fiction has pattern, we can say that it is greater than his poetry, which has only force. But we must always remember that the life of the fiction is one which seems to have been released by poetic powers and that these powers are unmistakably and unforgettably in the poems. The poems take Poe's anti-poetic world as a given and strain to expose the mysterious poetic power which he feels informs it. That such a world exists is a prime assumption without which the poems would have little or no meaning for us. They depend for their force upon a dialectic of simple opposition to the world for which they are written. Yet they make little contact with that world. They exist, as it were, to remind us of a possibility, "out of space—out of time," which by definition is never actualizable in a "real," common-sense situation.

The authentic poet is Israfel, whose world is the simple negative of this one. Poe must strive to be Israfel, so to escape the very world in which even Israfel would "not sing so wildly well/ A mortal melody." He makes his poems seem always to be striving to be out there, apart from his world—and ours too, so far as it might share his world's assumptions as to the significance of imaginative experience. The poems project disembodied creativity, so to speak—the force of an imagination driven to be true to itself at all costs. (In *Eureka*, we must remember, Poe tried to construct a rationale for such disembodied creativity; the net effect of the work is at the least one of helpless megalomania, at the most one of wilful demonism.) The egocentrism of Poe's poems achieves its greatest value for us by being finally, in its very agonizingly self-indulgent lyricism, an unsharable egocentrism. The poet is freed to be true to his sense of his self and his vocation, but only at the cost of cutting himself off from his vulgarly substantial world. What his act, his poetic act, means is considerably more than it is. This perhaps is the inevitable fate of a man who is more of a culture hero than an artist.

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In Emerson's poetry too there is a primary egocentrism, but it is intended to be an egocentrism which transmutes itself into universality by being fully acknowledged for what it is. Emerson indeed says goodbye to the proud world; but then he proceeds to take it home with him. Discovering the genuine and authentic Man—I return to Tocqueville's terms—Emerson would exhibit him in the very act of creating his society, his world, so that it cannot be *really* anti-poetic—if it is well enough known, as it would be in poems. As R. W. B. Lewis, reviving an old and valuable notion, has recently pointed out, Emerson (in one of his moods) conceived of the genuine and authentic Man as still another Adam: "Here's for the plain old Adam," Lewis quotes him as writing in his *Journals*, "the simple genuine self against the whole world." The opposition, self against the (anti-poetic) world, is evident everywhere in Emerson, of course; it is especially sharp in the poems, where it becomes a means of transmutation of the world into something freshly seen, fully found, and so a manifestation of the Adamic principle itself.

This principle works on the materials of Emerson's real world (he would have perhaps called it the world of appearance) in two ways: as it focusses on scene or thought; as it treats the natural world (I use "natural" in the conventional, non-Emersonian sense) or the world of ideas. In the first case—in "scenic" poems like "The Humble-Bee," "The Snow Storm," and in parts of "Wood Notes," "Seashore," and "Each and All,"—there is an attempt to achieve directly ("originally" in Emerson's Coleridgean language) that sense of the natural object which will reveal its meaning and thus make it available to the Reason (i. e., intuition). The end of such a poem is not so much to let us know the object as to know by means of it. What we are to come to know, as Emerson stated explicitly again and again in his essays, is that the poet is somehow one with it. But what we do come to know, as such poems work, is something a little different: the poet makes it one with himself. Adam gives his own name to what he sees and so creates (or recreates) his name and his self.

In the second case, that in which Emerson's Adamic principle treats of the world of ideas, we find poems whose subject is explicitly human actions and beliefs. Such actions and beliefs have for Emerson a paradoxical relation to the world in which they

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occur, being at once of it and apart from it; and in the poems he would resolve this paradox. In poems like "Each and All" and "Wood Notes" the resolution is managed partly by the descriptive-participative technique which I have already described. But in such poems there is need for more than this, since systematic thought, the dialectics of specifically human actions and beliefs, is involved. The means to this further resolution is characteristically a kind of poetic logic, or pseudo-logic.

The poet knows that true insight into his problem is possible only through a transcendental resolving of his paradox, and he works accordingly—presenting both (or all) sides of the paradox and making it appear to resolve itself in a moment of more-than-human insight. For the non-transcendentalist reader, poems which work thus can be said essentially to dramatize the resolution. For Emerson as transcendentalist poet, the poems can be said actually to create the resolution. For the reader, that is to say, there is no final transmutation of the egocentric into the universal, of Man into the world, and *vice-versa*. The egocentrism of Old Adam is there, and we mark it and its limitations as such. Emerson, for us, cannot get over the obstacle presented to his poetic aspiration by language in its very givenness, its referential quality, its component of anti-poetry. He can, however, make us know what it is creatively to struggle against that obstacle and, in struggling, to know himself all the better.

We feel the presence of a kindred obstacle especially in "philosophical" poems like "Hamatreya" and "Brahma". Properly to read these poems, I think, we must assume from the beginning the resolvability of the paradox around which they turn. There is nothing in the detailed life of the men named in "Hamatreya" which makes inevitable either the "Earth-Song" or the poet's acceptance of it. And in "Brahma," the unresolved details of the paradoxes persist unless we assume with the poet that merely by presenting them he presents also the resolution which is immanent in them. The resolution might well be there, but we are made to feel overpoweringly that the poet, this Man, has put it there.

Likewise, we hear the ineluctably autobiographical voice of the poet in poems of the order of "Bacchus." Here the conceiving and creating ego asks for

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Wine of wine,
Blood of the world,
Form of forms, and mould of statures,
That I intoxicated,
And by the draught assimilated,
May float at pleasure through all natures;
The bird-language rightly spell,
And that which roses say so well.

In the end the poet is intoxicated by nature and so is able, as he reports, truly to conceive of her and all her manifestations. The point is that here, as everywhere in his poems, the kind of meaning Emerson demands of poetry only he as poet can give to it. The ego is lost so that the ego may be saved; the poet is supremely possessed, but by himself. (Characteristically, at moments of insight, he must chant hypnotically, as here in "Bacchus" and in the "Earth-Song" section of "Hamatreya.") What is manifest in the best poems is not a union and identification of ego and nature, even though the poems nominally argue for that; it is rather an interpretation and definition of nature by a creative assertion of the ego. Even if he would, the poet cannot erase the opposition between himself and his world.

One can find this conception of poetry and the poet adumbrated in Emerson's essay "The Poet" if one reads it in the light of the performance of the poems, not of Emerson's transcendentalist hopes and presuppositions. Emerson's poet is "isolated among his contemporaries by his truth and his art. . . ." He is "the man without impediment, who sees and handles that which others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and impart." As for the poet's relation to his world: "All the facts of the animal economy, sex, nutriment, gestation, birth, growth, are symbols of the passage of the world into the soul of man. . ." And as for the American poet and his nominally anti-poetic world: "We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer. . . Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes and Indians, our boasts and

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our repudiations, the wrath of rogues and the pusillanimity of honest men, the northern trade, the southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung. Yet America is a poem in our eyes. . . ." To quote from "The Poet" thus is certainly to interpret it by deletion and selection. For the essay above all makes it clear that Emerson felt that the poet, in "receiving and imparting" the symbols of nature, transformed them into a "new and higher fact," a *single* fact, the One, the Oversoul, God. Yet we are justified, I think, in taking this belief of Emerson's as simply his personal means to making and believing in poems, and then in asking what he is able to make his poems do. He may conceive of poetry as vatic; yet his poems do not work vatically. They are too much *his* poems; their effect is one of an act of creation, not of revelation. What we observe is that in his poetry at its most powerful, to quote from "The Poet," again out of context, "The Universe is the externization of the soul." As we read the poems, Man externizes himself into his anti-poetic world, makes it an aspect of his conception of himself, but still remains Man in an anti-poetic world.

In the context of these notes, we can take Whitman to be the supremely realized Emersonian poet, sufficiently free of and insecure in theoretical concerns to let his ego roam and transform the world into an aspect of itself. If there ever was one, his is a true voice of feeling. Both the preface to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* and "By Blue Ontario's Shore," its poetic counterpart, are essentially expansions of "The Poet." And Whitman's conception of the forms of love whereby one is to achieve identity with the myriad aspects of the cosmos—this conception is a development of the Emersonian conception of the power of the poet as universal man. So much, I take it, is commonplace critical knowledge. What must be pointed out in these notes is the way in which the ego is made not only to assert but to preserve itself in the poems, the way in which the ego's tremendous creative power militates against that fusion of ego and cosmos which seems to have been Whitman's great desire. Emphasizing the desire (sharing it, perhaps), we have too often tended to mistake it for the effect, and the meaning, of the poetry itself.

The ego asserts itself Adamically, by naming. Yet the names are not new names; in Whitman's poems, in the great cata-

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logues, they are taken to have preexisted, as it were, but not yet really to have been known. The items which the poems so lovingly name are put together as they have never been before, so that they seem to be related only by the creative force of the poetic ego operative on them. There is little or no "qualitative progression" in the poems, for the persons and things which are made to inhabit them hardly interact. They are not conceived as modifying and qualifying one another, but are referred back to their creator, who does with them as his sensibility wills. The catalogues are thus an inevitable expressive form for one who would collocate all the world in the "Kosmos" of his self.

This is the poet's great power. And for all his apparent insistence that the collocation is out there, ready to be discovered so that the poet may re-create it, we feel the power to be so much uniquely and egocentrically his that the collocation is likewise his, and his alone. Whereas in what I have called Emerson's scenic poems, the natural world is said to reveal itself to Man (but, in my argument, poetically does not), in Whitman's poems the poet is explicitly and insistently shown making for natural revelation by the very creative act of his poem. Whitman glories almost exclusively in the first-person singular; Emerson trusts it, true enough, but would discover it in the third-person too. (Whitman, we may recall, said of *Leaves of Grass*, that it was the attempt "to put *a Person*; a human being [myself, in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, in America] freely, fully and truly on records.") Essentially, there is no third-person in Whitman's world. Hence there is no formal control in the poems but that which stems from the self revealing the world to itself. All experience, all thought, all belief, all appearance is referred back to the ego; or rather treated in such a way as to appear to have emanated from the ego:

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein, and poke-weed.

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Here—the passage is from the fifth section of "Song of Myself"—Whitman aspires at once to be objective and to achieve some sort of union with his world; yet his very power of naming, describing, and collocating is such that his reader cannot but be overwhelmingly, even uncritically, aware of the single ego which creates that world. Whitman's objectivity here is that of an impressionist, hence an aspect of his all-suffusing subjectivity. We are reminded that in poetry at least narcissism can be creative, since it can be a means to discovering and defining creativity.

The great example (there are others almost as great) is "The Sleepers," in which the ego supposedly is shown celebrating its oneness with all other egos. The poem moves, nonetheless, in a direction in which Whitman likely did not consciously intend it to. There emerges a sense of the sheer creativity involved in such a celebration, a sense so strong as to argue against the very oneness which is the poet's intended subject. In the night, in sleep, the poet is able, so he argues, to lose his sense of individuated self and to achieve vital union with all other selves. This is the argument, but only the argument. The poem begins thus:

I wander all night in my vision,
Stepping with light feet, swiftly and noiselessly stepping and stopping,
Bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of sleepers,
Wandering and confused, lost to myself, ill-assorted, contradictory,
Pausing, gazing, bending, and stopping.

"My vision" is of course the crucial phrase here. For as the poem develops, the night is made out to be the poet's lover, rendering him utterly passive. In this state he envisions himself as possessing and possessed by all men and all women, good and evil, now so undifferentiated as to be universally beautiful. And he comes to see that it is "the night and sleep [which have] liken'd them and restored them." The night then is finally given to its richest definition:

I too pass from the night,
I stay a while away O night, but I return to you again and love you.

Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you?
I am not afraid, I have been well brought forward by you,
I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her in whom I lay so long,

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I know not how I came of you and I know not where I go with you,
but I know I came well and shall go well.

I will stop only a time with the night, and rise betimes,
I will duly pass the day O my mother, and duly return to you.

It is thus a primal source of creativity, lover and genitrix, to which the poet must return, even as he must leave it for his daily life. Crucially, it is a source within the poet, the deepest aspect of himself as authentic person. Returning to his mother, he returns to himself as dreamer-creator, returns to the act with which the poem begins; for it is he who has "liken'd and restored" all to beauty.

Whatever Whitman's conscious philosophical intention, the form of the poem, its movement from the picture of the envisioning poet, to a series of catalogues and narratives of what he envisions, to the discovery that the act of envisioning makes all beautiful, then finally to the realization of the source of envisioning power—all this demonstrates a poet sufficiently conscious of his own commitment to isolated, egocentric creativity to manifest it even as he tries to transcend it. For us, the poem is the act of envisioning the soul as beautiful. The account of the source of the vision, its meaning and rationale, is part of that act and derives its power from the actor, not from the transcendental, pantheistic world-view toward which he aspires. Whereas in "The Sleepers" Whitman argues for a transcendent One which would *per se* universalize the ego, he expresses the act of the ego striving to universalize itself by recreating the world in its own image. The poet here is the one who elsewhere wrote of the "noiseless patient spider" which "to explore the vacant vast surrounding" has "launched forth filament, filament, filament out of itself. . ."

Whitman may have looked to a sort of Hegelian Absolute; he may well have felt that he was achieving it—which is to say, losing himself in cosmic process. Yet his poems show that, being compulsively a person, he could not. Sometimes, as in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," he establishes his relation to cosmic process by developing in an argument a series of carefully defined, clearly symbolic, but nonetheless ego-centered relationships. More often he celebrates aspects of process itself, but al-

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ways, committed to the dialectics of the poetic mode which he worked out, as a simple, separate participant.

He is, in the last analysis, the lonely observer who cannot but make the world participate with him:

> *I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression and shame,*
> *I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish with themselves, remorseful after deeds done. . .*

As this poem develops, we sense overpoweringly that Whitman is not of what he sees, "all the meanness and agony without end," but rather makes it of himself. The meaning of the poem is concentrated in the verbs and the adjective which make up the last line: "See, hear, and am silent." Involved in Whitman's conception of the poetic act are seeing, hearing, and being silent, as well as sounding the barbaric yawp. The one makes for the possibility of the other, keeps the poet somehow apart from the very anti-poetic world which he would infuse with his love, protects him from the potentially suicidal force of that love, does not let him be anyone but himself, and thus makes for the positive achievement of his kind of poetry.

I think we may even say that, at its points of achievement, this conception of the poetic act saves Whitman from the sort of grandiose mysticism for which he seems so often to have yearned and also from the excesses of the "Personalism" which he as often preached. That he is, in spite of his learning, necessarily cut off from large areas of knowledge and large forms of discipline (subsumable under some such word as "tradition,") is obvious enough, a sign of the weakness which is complementary to the strength of his poems. His conception of poetry, as we can make it out by reading his work critically, not only made for his poems; it also protected him from the world to which he perforce addressed them. For it demanded that the anti-poetic world be translatable into self, expressible thus in poetry, or have no claim to reality at all. We cannot help but see that this is to a degree a mutilating conception of reality. Yet it is at the same time a source of strength, for Whitman perhaps *the* source of strength.

The achievement of Emily Dickinson is the surest, in a way the simplest, of those I treat in these notes. I am not suggesting

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that her achievement is less than that of the others. On the contrary, I would say that the purity and integrity of her best work makes for the fullest and most direct expression of what I have claimed to be the egocentrism of the basic nineteenth-century American style. In Emily Dickinson we do not sense, as we do in Emerson and Whitman, the compulsion to be oneself in spite of the world and yet somehow to be oneself in terms of the world—no compulsion, in short, toward the transcendental dialectic. In Emerson and Whitman, poetic egocentrism, striving so often to be itself expressively and something else dialectically, emerges in powerful fits and starts, almost out of control, as a result of a break in the dialectical tension (between self and world) which the poets' very artistry (taking the form of an overwhelming sense of the claims of self) will not let them maintain. This sort of tension does not exist in Emily Dickinson's poems. Rather, she is simply and starkly concerned with being herself and accommodating her view of the world to that concern. Whatever her picture of herself as a Little Tippler tasting "a liquor never brewed" owes to Emerson's "Bacchus", the poems are essentially different in kind; for she gives no indication of trying to achieve Emerson's intended transcendental sacramentalism and thus of losing herself in her world. Here, as everywhere, she does not try to merge with nature, but rather to conceive of it. The conceiving self is primary; the poems explicitly celebrate the act of conception and no more. This limitation is so fully realized as to be the occasion of celebration:

Adventure most unto itself
The Soul condemned to be—
Attended by a single Hound
Its own identity.

The poems are thus, in all their restrictiveness, the purest of poems done in the basic nineteenth-century style.

We can take these most famous lines quite literally, I think:

This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me—
The simple News that Nature told—
With tender Majesty. . .

Emily Dickinson always reported to the world her sense of her-

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self and nature—in short, her sense of the world. It is not a matter of egotism, but rather one of a humble, tragic, pathetic, even humorous realization of limitations. The sense of limitation, realized as sharply as it is, is indeed her greatest spiritual strength and forces her poems into their triumphant egocentrism. This has been often observed in one way or another of her poems anatomizing her own psyche, and its adventures. I think, for example, of variations on the theme of the self defining itself as they occur in poems like "I felt a Cleaving in My Mind," "Renunciation—is a piercing Virtue," "Much Madness is divinest Sense," "The Soul selects her own Society," "I died for Beauty . . .," and "I dreaded that first Robin, so." Moreover there are the poems on religion in which she, as has often been remarked, now takes one stand and now another. In effect, she refuses to settle down to a definite theology even as she appears to assume that there very likely is one. What are God and immortality to me? she asks again and again. Trying to answer her own questions, she finds a new answer each time. That in this case the answers all seem to be variations on an expressive (as opposed to a repressive) Edwardsean Puritanism—this fact is not material to the working of any one of her poems. It is in the nature of the poems to refuse to point to anything but themselves as they are being made.

This self-sufficiency is above all apparent in the sort of poems in which egocentrism would have (and did have, in Emerson and Whitman) its greatest struggle to survive—poems of the natural world. (Poe, in his concern to demonstrate the value of the darkly egocentric origins and supernal life of the imagination, never got as far as poetizing the natural world; this is an aspect of the hyperexpressionism of his poems.) In a poem like the celebrated "A Route of Evanescence," the very objectivity of the natural scene is a product of the poet's control of the language with which she pictures it. The metaphors testify to the poet's controlling presence; and at the end ("The mail from Tunis, probably,/ An easy Morning's Ride—"), the commentary gives an interpretative assertion in which we discover that the poet has fully taken over and used what she has seen and created out of her seeing. We are forced to focus our interest on her, as the poem's maker.

Beyond this, if Emily Dickinson directly relates the natural world to her own sense of herself, it is by a kind of allegory, in

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which self and nature are kept quite separate. I would cite as examples here, among many others, three poems which Yvor Winters (in his essay on Emily Dickinson, in *Maule's Curse*) has analysed from this point of view: "A Light exists in Spring/ Not present on the Year," "As imperceptibly as Grief/ The Summer lapsed away,"—and "There's a certain Slant of light,/ Winter Afternoons." In these poems the natural images are selected explicitly as they contribute to a definition of a moral experience; they are not, in any sense, there for their own sakes, scenically; the language in which they are cast has no meaning except as it is focussed on the moral experience involved; nature is made to be, as it were, the self allegorized. So, in the last stanza of the third poem named:

> *When it comes, the Landscape listens—*
> *Shadows—hold their breath—*
> *When it goes, 'tis like the Distance*
> *On the look of Death—*

The qualities here imputed to the natural scene are human qualities, but their humanness explicitly derives from the situation of the poet-protagonist—as though the objective reality of nature were irrelevant, whereas the felt quality were everything. We may observe that the transaction in which Nature "told" Emily Dickinson this "simple News" was an involved one, since she told it to Nature first.

The function of these poems, then, is to let us see the poet in the act of making poems, and thus of making herself—or her understanding of herself. A useful analogy perhaps is Melville's Ishmael, impressing upon us that he is writing his novel after the fact, making us assent to his utter freedom to adduce material from whatever quarter he wishes and to write from various points of view and in various forms, just so he may understand what has happened to himself, just so he may create himself, or at least the possibility of himself. The great conglomeration of Emily Dickinson's poetry is indeed a kind of *Moby Dick*. Her poetry has its own kind of proliferation and plenitude, and its own kind of incompleteness; for the very lack of "system" in the poetry, the very openendedness of its conception of the creating self, is such that there is, properly speaking, no end and no beginning—just life being made even as it is being lived through.

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Of something like this, I think, Emily Dickinson must have been conscious—although she puts it in her own typically restrictive terms—since, in spite of the overarching of her imaginative grasp toward things, there was for her no Whale, just her own soul in her own world. Thus there is the poem which begins:

I dwell in Possibility—
A fairer House than Prose—
More numerous of Windows—
Superior—for Doors—

and ends:

For Occupation—This—
The spreading wide my narrow Hands
To gather Paradise—

Moreover, she could conceive precisely of the risks and losses of creating a world entirely unto the self:

Perception of an object costs
Precise the Object's loss—
Perception in itself a Gain
Replying to its Price—
The Object Absolute—is nought—
Perception sets it fair
And then upbraids a Perfectness
That situates so far—

Above all, it is *her* world, framed by variations on the hymn stanza and seeming-casual rhymes, held together by a variety of subtle internal echoings and parallels, modulated (as the Johnson text now lets us see) by an improvised kind of punctuation (mostly dashes)—all of which let us sense a quality of vital annotation, as though the moment had to be put down *now*, the only time it would ever exist for her whose moment it was. She is the Puritan diarist who no longer has to believe that her acutely sensed private experiences are valuable and explicable only as types of something larger than they—something given from above, from outside herself. Which is to say, she is the extreme American Protestant self which, when it comes fully alive in its greatest poems, is in effect able to set its institutional and religious commitments aside and be radically and unflinchingly itself, radically

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and unflinchingly free. In that freedom there is at once loss, denial, pain, release, certainty, and victory.

In what sense, finally, does Emily Dickinson's poetry come out of the sort of anti-poetic world of which Tocqueville wrote? In the simplest sense: that in its very egocentric limitation (of whose biographical origin we are now certain), it finds its greatest strength and achievement; for herein it gives life to those clichés of the self which an anti-poetic society was perforce bringing into dominance. It battles against and wins out over the mass media of the psyche. Professor Whicher's observation on this matter, in *This was a Poet*, goes even deeper than he seems to have intended it to: "Her poems were demonstrations that the simplest commonplaces of life in America could be vitalized and made precious to the mind."

What Emily Dickinson never achieved, nor could try to achieve, one guesses, was a philosophical poetry which, in its submission to traditional intellectual and artistic disciplines, would allow the ego to discover its formal relations to other egos and to celebrate not only the relations but their forms—the grand myths so to speak. (That a "philosophy" is deducible from her poems and the record of her life is yet another matter.) But, as I have argued, neither could Whitman or Emerson, who tried at once to hold to their egocentrism and to be philosophical poets; nor, I venture to say, could Poe, who left us *Eureka*, a pseudo-poem in which the work of the creative imagination, its very existence and function rationalized, is transformed into painfully amateurish dialectics. For many reasons, none of which are immediately relevant to the kind of analysis I have undertaken, Emily Dickinson held close to, and thereby most richly developed, the egocentric style which I am suggesting is basic in nineteenth-century poetry. This was her triumph. Reading her along with Poe, Emerson, and Whitman, we can say that this was in part their triumph too, and thus, almost in spite of itself, one of the triumphs of their culture.

3

Having put down my hypothesis and annotated it, I now propose a definition of the ideal type of major nineteenth-century American poem. This poem is one which portrays the simple, separating inwardness of Man as that which at once forms and

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is formed by a vision of the world in which it has its being. Expressively this poem is one which makes us aware of the operation of the creative imagination as an act of self-definition—thus, whether the poet wills it or not, of self-limitation. The poem may nominally argue for many things, may have many subjects, may be descriptive of the world at large; but always it will implicitly argue for one thing—the vital necessity of its own existence and of the ego which creates and informs it. Its essential argument is the life of poetry itself, as this life makes viable a conception of man as radically free to know, be, and make himself. Herein lies perhaps the crucial quality of its so-called romanticism.[1] The historian is able to observe after the fact: What other kind of poem could be written in an anti-poetic society by one whose very vocation (which we must take as a given) committed him to the primacy of the idea of Man? What could he do but try to use the language his culture gave him and convert its implicit anti-poetry to a celebration of the one Man he could fully know, himself? That he often wanted to write a poetry as cosmic as it was personal is beside the point in this analysis of his *basic* style—

[1]At this point the reader, like the author, might want at least to raise the proper comparatist question as to the relevance of English and European "romantic" poetry—with *its* conception of the role (or roles) of the self—to the American poetry under discussion. Since the question is not dircctly relevant to the discussion, the author has come to feel that it should be raised and answered only in a footnote. In the first place: I am concerned to move centripetally, to define the basic style only in such a way as to relate it to some of the basic issues in American culture; I hope thus to make the poetry more available historically, as it were, to the American reader who is of that culture and to the non-American who would understand it. And in the second place: I should hazard the guess that the basic American style may be differentiated from the basic European and English style (or styles) precisely to the degree that it centers on the confused dialectic involved in having oneself and losing it, of being apart from society even as one redefines the integrative force of society in terms of that very apartness. The burden of being oneself seems to be more bearable (or better borne) in the English and European romantic poetry that I know; the anguish, and the triumph of the anguish, seems to be purer; the diversitarianism, more completely achieved; the basic style (or styles) more fully realized. But this is a guess that only the proper comparatist is entitled to make and to evaluate. And I like to think that he had best begin with "nationalistic" considerations llke those in my essay. I take refuge, in short, in the wise opening words of Américo Castro's "Presence of the Sultan Saladin in the Romance Literatures," *Diogenes*, No. 8 (Autumn 1954), pp. 13-36: "Cultural phenomena never exist except in connexion with the agents of human life that make them possible and endow them with their authentic value. Culture is not of itself a fertilising rain—nothing human can be 'of itself' an island of abstraction. Literary themes, then, are things that happen in and to someone's historical life. Their value is manifested to its full extent when the theme that interests us is seen as the expression, through an individual, of a particular people, who, in giving life to the literary theme, achieves its self-realisation in terms of a value structure. . . ."

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the style he willy-nilly shared with others of his vocation. This perhaps was his crucial role in his culture: to preserve and make possible of realization the idea of Man as a simple, separate person, an authentic self.

Certainly in much twentieth-century American poetry, as we have come to assure ourselves, this is still the poet's essential role. It is true, however, that at the end of the first decade of our century, the dominant poetic mode of the nineteenth-century, its basic style, seemed to have spent itself. We can, for example, see this happening in the work of E. A. Robinson, in which is portrayed the emptiness of many selves (known not as first-persons, but as third-), surviving as persons, if they do, only by their capacity to live heroically with their illusions. The mode of such poetry, deriving so much stylistically from that of its great precursors, seems to have been unsatisfactory for Robinson; for he moved to a series of dramatic but shapeless, quasi-philosophic poems in which he tried to erect the principle of the self living on illusions to a positive belief in the world which guaranteed something beyond illusions. He could not, however, convert disillusioned inwardness to illusioned outwardness, especially by the fiat of making short negative poems long, positive, and "dramatic." He was equipped as a poet, as had been Poe, Emerson, Whitman, and Emily Dickinson before him, primarily to explore necessarily fragmented inwardness, not to construct whole, well-ordered systems.

More important is the reaction against the basic nineteenth-century style (or against its turn-of-the-century failures) in Pound and Eliot. They set about to create a whole new poetic mode, one in which the ego would be defined by sources outside of itself, in which its aim would be not to create and shape itself but to seek the discipline whereby it might achieve the form and wholeness which seemed otherwise unattainable. Nonetheless, as it becomes more and more apparent to us, Pound and Eliot and their tradition are not all of twentieth-century American poetry. I would suggest that the basic style of the nineteenth century has existed in the twentieth as a minor line, which now looks again to become the major line. I refer of course to the line of poets whose work culminates in that of Wallace Stevens. In these poets— some of them are as different from Stevens as Cummings, Williams, Marianne Moore, and Roethke—the

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American way of poetry is still, to misecho Mr. Trilling's phrase, that of the imposing self. And it is a way still as significant as much for what it cannot successfully deal with (in all, a sense of culture as having something like an autonomous validity), as for what it can (a sense of the self as valid only when autonomous). That, in recently rediscovering this way and the neo-Romanticism it validates, we have not concerned ourselves much with what it cannot deal with—this is our misfortune.

Thinking of our nineteenth-century poetry in relation to that of the twentieth which carries on the basic style, we may note how the twentieth-century subject is now so often the very possibility of poetry itself. I venture to think that this means that Tocqueville's observations about literature in the United States still hold; only, as we all too well know, the terms are now more extreme, the urgencies more desperate, and the poet more and more aware of his crucial, lonely, and imperious role as trustee of our imaginative language. He is, we are in the habit of saying, a "purer" poet. And we tend to suspect and resent his purity and the imperiousness and loneliness that go with it. We wonder what his fierce pursuit of the verbally adequate (which is to say, the beautiful) has to do with us and we with it. We begin to be uneasy about what we so often take to be estheticism for estheticism's sake. At this point, I suggest that we can try to think historically and see that it is not estheticism but the impulse to creativity which is at the heart of his matter. Moreover, we might try to see how he makes this creativity out to be, if not humanity itself, at least the first step toward the achievement of humanity. Granting the situation of our culture, this might have been and still be, for good and for bad, our prime "use" of poetry. In any case, the opening lines of Stevens' "Of Modern Poetry", may well describe for us the ideal type of poems, nineteenth- and twentieth-century poems, conceived in the basic style, definition of which has been the purpose of these notes:

> *The poem of the mind in the act of finding*
> *What will suffice.*

My hypothesis leads me to suggest that thus it has always had to be with some of our major poets and with that part of ourselves to which they speak.

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YVOR WINTERS

Two Old-Fashioned Songs

I. Danse Macabre

Who was who and where were they
Scholars all and bound to go
Iambs without heel or toe
Something one would never say
Moving in a certain way

Students with an empty book
Poets neither here nor there
Critics without face or hair
Something had them on the hook
Here was neither king nor rook

This is something some one said
I was wrong and he was right
Indirection in the night
Every second move was dead
Though I came I went instead

II. A Dream Vision

What was all the talk about?
This was something to decide.
It was not that I had died.
Though my plans were new, no doubt,
There was nothing to deride.

I had grown away from youth,
Shedding error where I could;
I was now essential wood,
Concentrating into truth;
What I did was small but good.

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Orchard tree beside the road,
Bare to core, but living still!
Moving little was my skill.
I could hear the farting toad
Shifting to observe the kill,

Spotted sparrow, spawn of dung,
Mumbling on a horse's turd,
Bullfinch, wren, or mockingbird
Screaming with a pointed tongue
Objurgation without word.

KARL SHAPIRO

Cadillac

Your luna moths bring poems to my eyes,
Your oriflamme brings banners to my slums;
You are fat and beautiful, rich and ugly,
A boiler with gold leaf floral decorations;
You are a hard plush chair with sloping shoulders
In which Victoria, like a kangaroo,
Raises her blazing arms to a poem by Mr. Tennyson.

In the sewing machine of your mind you mend my flags,
Under your forehead fatted sheep are feeding,
Falcons are climbing at unwritten speeds,
Adding machines are singing your arias,
Your motor playing chess with continents,
With Quincy, Illinois, with Hell, New Jersey,
Halting on Oriental rugs in Fez.
Beautiful are your fine cartouches,
Your organ pipes externalized like tusks.

If only I could put my arm around you,
If only I could look you in the eye,

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I would tell you a grave joke about turtles' eggs,
But there are always your ostrich plumes,
The hydrangeas drooping between your breasts.
I am afraid of your prosthetic wrists,
The mason jars of your white corpuscles.

For Christmas I will send you Maeterlinck's *Life of the Bee*.

Priests are praying for your beautiful passengers;
Sacraments are burning in your barley-sugar lighthouses;
You carry wild lawyers over yellow bridges;
Your soul as slow as honey coils in vats.

Voluptuous feather-plated Pegasus,
You carry the horizontal thoughtful dead
To golf greens and to sculpture yards of peace.
On leafy springs, O Love, O Death,
Your footfall is the silence that perfects.

I see you everywhere except in dreams.

FORREST READ

Ballata

Because I do not hope to turn again
Ballata, to Tuscany,
Go you light and freely
Straightway unto my Lady;
Fierce in proud courtesy
She will tend you honor.

You will bear with you news of my sighs,
Full of pain, scored deep with my bitter fear;
But take care that you kindle not the eyes
Of foes who hate gentle nature, who would tear
You, for surely in scorn of my agonies

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Your song would be forbid
And your light so hid
I would drink my anguish;
Then would I wish
Death, for such dolor.

You feel, ballata, the tight vines of death
Clutch at me, and my life oozes away;
You hear my heart echo her, and my breath
And sense press with desire in their long stay.
Already my person is shattered so completely
No more do I suffer;
If solace or ease you offer
Only this much I beg you:
Draw my soul with you
When it leaves my door.

Ah! ballata, tomb of unfriended gentleness,
This soul, which trembles, I now commend you;
Take it with you, worn by its distress,
To that beautiful lady to whom I send you.
Ah! ballata, say when those sighs unbend you
To the brightness of her eyes:
"Your fated servant flies
Here, to rest with you,
Wrenched from one you knew
A slave to Amor."

You, voice weakened by terror and pitiful,
Who issue in groans from a defenseless body,
With this ballata go, and with this soul
Go, discoursing a mind that now has fled me.
For voice, song, and soul shall find a Lady
Of maiden joy so bright
Pain will become delight
To sing in praise forever.
Soul, you shall adore her
When I cease my labor.

Translated from Cavalcanti

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HY SOBILOFF

Schoolmaster

This was the first time I flew over my father's grave
It was then that I knew he was there
My father, whose toil of limbs and mind and heart
Did father me.

Wearing my autumn skin
I flew across tombstone dots.
The leaves fell to fertilize the future
In one process strangling and breathing.
These graves were lessons I once knew,
Now skeletons of truth.

My father in his dying years shackled his younger promises
To the slavery of fatherhood.
His hands unfolded bolts of cloth
Not for a shroud but for the doctor's fee;
While I lay lonely yearning in my quarantined room
Not hearing his tiptoeing, outside weeping,
Eavesdropping for the rasp of breath.

As I flew above my childhood among paths of autumn colors
I felt his anger-prod of perfection hiding in the wooden chapel
But could not hear the failing bell.
Autumn leaves scattered the city macadam
And dusted my father's grave.

My father was everywhere in still language.
I flew above his grave and felt the dying flares
Signal inside me,
The grave became a speck
Among trees rusting in orange age.

Nature flew me across my childhood
Near the road that first surrendered me to autumn.
Empty branches shadowed the chrysanthemum bud;
My son's first cry filled a new cradle
With evidences that my father lived,
Almost myself my father and my son myself.

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B. L. REID

A Portfolio from Ernst Barlach

I. *Monks Reading*

The book combines them
Staples them knee to knee,
Or look more curiously
A dove defines them
Fables them three—
Monk and monk and vellum
In a two headed column
Sacked in cloth and piety.
Love winds them
And stupidity—
One thinned and hollowed
Adoring our lady;
One stunned and haloed
In sweet cro-magnon simplicity.

II. *The Prophet*

Is his sharp demonstration
Product of prayer
Or emaciation?
I wonder scenting the spare
Death mask of him exhaling the words
Of the ruddy god of Moses.
Fingers thin as birds'
Distribute blight for all the roses;
The lean gothic motive
Declares the gesture votive.

III. *The Beggar Woman*

This lumpy old geometer,
Sphere ellipse and pyramid
Owl face as pedometer,

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Squats here amid
A tilting wedge of planet;
Articulate toes and fingers
The body's clay granite
Mute outrageous singers:
I have lasted
I have fasted.

IV. *Head*

The brow's blunt branching scimitar
The lips' soft seam, the plaited eyelids
Pledge her less to Demeter
Than to the black Caryatids.
See how time's burrowing architrave
Combs the clotted marble of her hair.
All patience all that is grave
All brave all fear all fair
Pressed here in a skinful of bone
Between an upper and a nether stone.

V. *The Holy Family*

The wool headed carpenter
Casts the cloth in ripples
Bronzen comforter
For the mannikin dame whose maiden nipples
Attend the sleepy doll's divine hunger.
Magical maiden, mystic doll!
Shuffles the sheepish wonder
Under his mutton poll—
Moved thus to build
Alfresco by his vast cuckolding client—
Which of his guild
Will swing the pliant
Adze whittling the gaunt cross
To stretch the bearded
Doll, thorns in a ringing boss,
Above the shriven herded?

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ERROL PRITCHARD

The Capture

I could not boast; a little love
Was left between us. When you took
My hand in yours and bid me move
Off to the quiet of a lake,
To lie with you a while, how could
I boast to anyone that I had

Caught you at last in love? But no—
Not caught: bound, perhaps, by my arms
And motion. You were blind, to show
No fear. Out where that lake most gleams,
Brilliant in night, I have you there
Captured, my love, part of the air,

Part of the night. You will not go,
You will be there although the trees
Are stark, the lake translucent snow,
The flowers dead, ceremonious bees
Vanished for winter. What I could take
From you, I bound into this lake.

Having the lake, what more do I need
Of you? You suffered me to fail.
My flesh is palsied, fingers bleed,
The snow grows red. You came to flail
Your winter in my face, and take
My heart. I have yours in this lake,

I own your heart. You will not find
Release from capture, though you come
Again to take my hand, the wind
Again blow summer, scent of loam
Spring afresh. I cease to weep—
I boast now, you will not escape.

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HERBERT GOLD

The Purity and Cunning of Sherwood Anderson

1. "*A Little Worm in the Fair Apple of Progress.*"

He said it of himself. He saw himself curled up, busily feeding on midwestern America, sheltered, destructive, loving his host, and needed by this age and place in order that they could get some sense of buoyancy and carry within them the richness of growth. He recognized his own childish self-absorption, great even for an artist, a breed accused by everyone of being childishly self-absorbed. Therefore he wrote about death with praise because "it will in any case give us escape from this disease of self." Self-love is surely the beginning of the love of others, but it is only the beginning. Sherwood Anderson, an old child, suffered a merely erratic love of himself, therefore writhed with a tormented love of others. All his stories are bound up in this sense of the self's isolation, seen as glory and sickness, as sickness and glory. He is one of the purest, most intense poets of loneliness—the loneliness of being an individual and of being buffeted in the current, the loneliness of isolation and that of being swallowed. One type represents the traditional retreat into the self for self-possession; the other, and its adversary at times, arises out of the angry resentment of a sensible man in an assemblyline civilization. Anderson's work is a manual of the ways in which loneliness can be used. It was his nourishment and sometimes his poison.

"I pour a dream over it . . . . I want to write beautifully, create beautifully, not outside but in this thing in which I am born, in this place where, in the midst of ugly towns, cities, Fords, moving pictures, I have always lived, must always live." Yet he fled it always. He fled in order to find himself, then prayed to flee that disease of self, to become "beautiful and clear . . . plangent and radiant." He felt that he loved only the midwestern land and people, but was still fleeing when he died—in the Panama Canal Zone.

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In his photographs he often showed his hair hanging over his eyes. The affectation means a great deal: first mere arty affectation (how he loved the "free spirits" of Greenwich Village and New Orleans!), then something feminine and wanting to be pretty and lovable for prettiness, and then of course the blurring of sight when you try to see through your own hair. What do you see? A world organized by your hair. "I must snap my finger at the world . . . . I have thought of everyone and everything." His sympathy and his oceanic feelings alternate with arrogant despair in which the arrogance can deceive no one. So desperately hurt he is, trying so hard to convince the "word-fellows" he wanted to admire him. But then his nostalgia gives us the mood he sought to force: " . . . old fellows in my home town speaking feelingly of an evening spent on the big, empty plains. It has taken the shrillness out of them. They had learned the trick of quiet. It affected their whole lives. It made them significant."

We understand him at last!

And then again the helpless bombast: "At my best, brother, I am like a great mother bird . . . . " He exuded through his pores the ferocious longing of a giant of loneliness. The typical chords from his letters sound under the changing heroes of the stories:

> Youth not given a break—youth licked before it starts.
>
> Filled with sadness that you weren't there.
>
> I have a lot I want to tell you if I can. . . . Anyway you know what I mean when we talked of a man working in the small, trying to save a little of the feeling of man for man.

The romantic sentimentalist held up his mirror to look at his world, peered deeply, saw himself instead, of course; wrote painfully about what he saw; and it turned out that he was writing about the world after all, squeezing it by this palpitating midwestern honesty out of his grandiose sorrows and longings. Sometimes, anyway. He was not a pure man; he had a kind of farmer cunning, plus his groaning artiness and pretense, with which he hoped to convince the "word-fellows" and the pretty girls that he was a Poet although not a young one. What he really wanted was to be alone in that succession of gray furnished rooms he talked about so eloquently, making immortal the quiet noise and gentle terror of his childhood. "I try to believe in beauty and

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innocence in the midst of the most terrible clutter." But clutter too was the truth of his life; he fed on it; how else does a poet take the measure of his need for "beauty and innocence"? He must have remained an optimist, too, amidst all his disillusion. He married four times. To the end of his life he went on believing, and marrying.

Anderson the writer arouses a poking curiosity about Anderson the man even in the most resolutely detached critic. The note of confession is always with us: Here I am, it's good that you know! he seems to be saying.

His very paragraphs are soaked in his own groping speech. He repeats, he cries out, he harangues, he pleads. All his work, the abysmal failures and the successes which have helped to construct the vision Americans have of themselves, represents an innocent, factitious, improvised, schemed reflection and elaboration of the elements of his own life. He turns the private into the public and then back into the private again. His mystery as a man remains despite his childish longing to reveal himself—the mystery of a man who looks at a man with a beard and a scar in a conference room and sees, instead, a lover fleeing his girl's brothers through the fields. (They had knives and slashed—could this be the same man? he asks himself.) Anderson confounds us with bombast and wit, tenderness and softheadedness, rant and exquisite delicacy.

The best of his work is what matters.

Let us now look more closely at what the worm made of his apple.

2. "*My Feet Are Cold and Wet.*"

He loved to create, he loved his fantasy as the lonely boy does. In his best work, as in some of the stories of *Winesburg, Ohio,* the fantasy is most controlled, or if not exactly controlled, simplified, given a single lyrical line. The novels had trouble passing the test of the adult imagination, being wild proliferations of daydream. The simple stories of Kate Swift ("The Teacher") or Wing Biddlebaum ("Hands") join Sherwood Anderson with the reader's sense of wonder and despair at the pathetic in his own past—childish hope of love, failed ambition, weakness and loneliness. As music can do, such stories liberate the fantasies of our secret

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lives. However, musicians will agree that music is for listening, not to be used as a stimulus for fantasy. We must attend to the song itself, not take advantage of it and make it the passive instrument of our dreaming. In the same way, the great writers hope to arouse and lead the reader's imagination toward a strong individual perspective on experience. Sherwood Anderson, however, was not of that vividly individualistic company, despite his personal hobby of eccentric Bohemianism. Rather, he was the dreamy, sad, romantic within each of us, evoking with nostalgia and grief the bitter moments of recognition which have formed him—formed all of us in our lonely America.

James Joyce used the word "epiphany," which he took from Catholic ritual, to name that moment of revelation when words and acts come together to manifest something new, familiar, timeless, the deep summation of meaning. The experience of epiphany is characteristic of great literature, and the lyric tales of Anderson give this wonderful rapt coming-forth, time and time again.

In "The Untold Lie," for example, two men tenderly meet in order to talk about whether one, the younger, should marry the girl he has made pregnant. The older man, unhappy in his own marriage, wants to see the young man's life free and charged with powerful action as his own has never been. But it is revealed to him—revelation is almost always the climax of Anderson's stories—that life without wife and children is impossible and that one man's sorrows cannot be used by him to prevent another man from choosing the same sorrows. It would be a lie to say that the life of conjugal sorrows is merely a life of conjugal sorrows: the story finally breathes the sadness, the beauty, the necessary risks of grownup desire. "Whatever I told him would have been a lie," he decides. Each man has to make his own decisions and live out his chosen failures of ideal freedom.

Many of Anderson's stories take for their realization objective circumstances which have a grandiose folkish quality, and many of both the most impressive and the most mawkish are concerned with an archtypical experience of civilization: the test which, successfully passed, commands manhood. Such a story as "The Man Who Became a Woman" objectifies even in its title the boy's wondering and fearful dream. The end sought is manliness, that new clean and free life; failure is seen as a process of being made effeminate, or falling into old patterns of feeling and action. At

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his best in these stories, there is a physical joy in triumph which is fresh, clean, genial—we think of Mark Twain, although a Twain without the robust humor; at his weak moments, we may also think of the sentimental sick Twain, and we find also the maundering moping of a prettified Thomas Wolfe.

The line between the subjects of Anderson's stories and Sherwood Anderson himself is barely drawn. His relation as artist to his material, as shaper of his material, is as intense and personal as that of any modern writer. Unlike most writing dealing with unhappy and frustrated people, Anderson's work is absolutely authentic in the double sense—not merely in communicating the feeling of these people as people, but also in giving us the conviction that the author shares both their bitter frustration and their evanescent occasional triumphs. By comparison with Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevsky is a monument of cool detachment. His identification is perfect, sometimes verging on the morbid: "Everyone in the world is Christ and they are all crucified." He has a primitive idealism, a spoiled romanticism like that of Rousseau: we could be all innocent and pure in our crafts if the machines of America and the fates that bring machines did not cripple us.

This romantic idealism can be illustrated again by his treatment of another theme, marriage, in the story "Loneliness," in which he writes of Enoch Robinson: "Two children were born to the woman he married,"—just as if they did not happen to Robinson at all, which is indeed the truth about the self-isolated personality he describes. "He dismissed the essence of things," Anderson can write, "and played with realities." Again the romantic Platonist sees a conflict between the deepest meaning and the fact of our lives, between what we do and what we "really" are. With a kind of purity and cunning, Anderson seems to thrive on this curiously boyish notion the limitations of which most of us quickly learn. We work and love because we know that there is no other way to be ourselves than in relation to the rest of the world. The kind man is the man who performs kind acts; the generous man is a man who behaves generously; we distrust the "essential" generosity which is sometimes claimed for the soul of a man who selfishly watches out only for himself. And yet we can be reminded with a strange force by Anderson's conviction in his boyish dream of isolated personality that there is something totally private, untouchable, beyond appearance and action, in all of us. The observation is a familiar

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one, but the experience can be emotionally crucial. Cunningly Anderson makes us turn to ourselves again with some of his own purity.

The last sentence of "Departure" says of George Willard: "Winesburg had disappeared and his life there had become but a background on which to paint the dreams of his manhood." Abstracted people, playing out their time in the fragmentary society of Winesburg, these "heroes" are isolated, as Anderson himself was isolated, by art or unfulfilled love or religion—by the unsurmounted challenge of finding the self within relationship with others. It was the deep trouble of Anderson's own life that he saw his self, which could be realized only by that monstrous thing, the Life of Art, as flourishing in opposition to decent connections with others in society. Marriage, work, friendship were beautiful things; but the gray series of furnished slum rooms, in which he wrote, enough rooms to fill a city, were his real home. Writing letters and brooding behind his locked door, he idealized love, he idealized friendship. He withdrew to the company of phantom creatures. He hoped to guard his integrity. He kept himself the sort of child-man he described with such comprehending sympathy in the character of Enoch Robinson.

In many writers dealing with the grim facts of our lives, the personal sense of triumph at encompassing the material adds a note of confidence which is at variance with the story itself. Hemingway is a good example; his heroes go down to defeat, but Papa Hemingway the chronicler springs eternal. In Anderson this external note of confidence and pride in craft is lacking, except in some of the specious, overwilled novels which he wrote under political influences. Generally he does not import his poetry into the work—he allows only the poetry that is *there*—nor does his independent life as a creator come to change the tone of these sad tales. The stories of Winesburg are unselfconsciously committed to him as he is sworn true to them; the identification—a variety of loyalty—is torturingly complete; he is related to his material with a love that lacks esthetic detachment and often lacks the control which comes with that detachment. They are practically unique in this among modern storytelling, and it is partially this that gives them their sometimes embarrassing, often tormenting and unforgettable folk quality. Still they are not folktales but, rather, pseudofolktales. The romantic longing and grieving is not character-

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istic of the folktale, despite the other elements, a direct matter-of-fact storytelling, colloquial American language (complicated by chivalry and the Bible, but at its best not "literary"), and the authority of Anderson's priestly devotion to his lives and people. Later, of course, the romantic judgment culminated in rebellion, sometimes in a kind of esthetic rant against the way things are.

In "The Strength of God," the Reverend Curtis Hartman (as in a parable, Heart-man) "wondered if the flame of the spirit really burned in him and dreamed of a day when a strong sweet current of power would come like a great wind into his voice and his soul and the people would tremble before the spirit of God made manifest in him. 'I am a poor stick and that will never really happen to me,' he mused dejectedly, and then a patient smile lit up his features. 'Oh well, I suppose I'm doing well enough,' he added philosophically."

These, as *The New Yorker* would put it, are musings that never got mused and philosophic additions that never got philosophically added. They have a curious archaic directness that amounts to a kind of stylization. The unanalytic simplicity itself is a sophisticated manner. As the officer of the Pharisees said, "Never man spake like this man." It recalls to us the day of the storyteller who suggested the broad line of an action, and allowed us to give our imaginations to it. Nowadays we demand detail upon detail, and the phrase "I am a poor stick" would require a whole book of exposition in the hands of most contemporary novelists.

The pathos of the pious man's temptation by the flesh has a flavor beautifully evocative of adolescence. We no longer think of "carnal temptation" as Anderson did. But we remember our fears and guilts, and are reminded of ourselves as great literature always reminds us. Hartman's silent, secret battle with himself over Kate Swift is given part of its bite by her own story—this pimply, passionate young school teacher who strikes beauty without knowing it and can find no one to speak to her. Her story is told with a brilliant delicacy that reflects Anderson's own strange reticence about women. Enoch Robinson, he says, "tried to have an affair with a woman of the town met on the sidewalk before his lodging house." To have an affair is his strange idiom for a pickup! (The boy got frightened, and ran away; the woman roared with laughter and picked up someone else).

Except for the poetic schoolteacher and a very few others, women

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are not women in Anderson's stories. There are the girls who suffer under the kind of sensitivity, passion, and lonely burning which was Anderson's own lot; and then there are the Women. For Anderson women have a strange holy power; they are earth-mothers, ectoplasmic spirits, sometimes succubi, rarely individual living creatures. In "Hands" they are not girls but "maidens," where the word gives a quaint archaic charm to the creature who taunts poor, damned, lonely Wing Biddlebaum. The berry-picking "maidens" gambol while the boys are "boisterous," and the hero flutters in his tormented realm between the sexes.

In somewhere like Wing Biddlebaum's tormented realm, Sherwood Anderson also abode. American cities, as he wrote, are "noisy and terrible," and they fascinated him. He got much of the noise and terror into his writing about big cities, and the quiet noise and gentle terror of little towns into his stories about them. And among the fright of materialistic life, he continually rediscovered the minor beauties which made life possible for him—the moment of love, of friendship, of self-realization. That they were but moments is not entirely the fault of Anderson's own character.

3. "*The Air of a Creator.*"

Anderson is shrewd, sometimes just, and has earned the right to even the unjust judgments he makes of other writers. How earned them? He was constantly fighting through both the questions of craft and the deeper risks of imagination. He has won the right to make sweeping pronouncements on his peers. Of Sinclair Lewis, for example, he offers the most damning, most apt criticism: "Wanting to see beauty descend upon our lives like a rainstorm, he has become blind to the minor beauties our lives hold." Sherwood Anderson wants the same thing, but holds to the good sense which a poet can still have in a difficult time: he clings to the minor beauties which give tenderness to his longing, a hope of something else to his despair. For this reason Anderson's critique of America finally bites more deeply than the novels of the ferocious sentimental satirist who was his contemporary.

Of Henry James, Anderson wrote that he is a man who "never found anyone to love, who did not dare love . . . . Can it be that he is the novelist of the haters? Oh, the thing infinitely refined and carried far into the field of intellectuality, as skillful haters

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find out how to do." The Jamesian flight from direct fleshly feeling offended Anderson. James objectified, stipulated, laid bare, and then suffused his entire yearning personality over all his work, so that Isabel Archer and Hyacinth Robinson are, really are Henry James, in all his hopeless longing, and yet spiritualized, that is, without body, epicene as James seems to have made himself in real life. George Santayana believed that by withholding love from a specific object it could be given "in general" to the whole world. This is a curiously commercial, economical notion—the idea that there is a limited amount of love and that we have the choice of spending it on a few selfishly chosen objects or distributing it generally. "In general" we know that this is nonsense; our attachments to individuals are the models for our attachments to humanity as an ideal; but like many sorts of nonsense, it worked for Henry James to the extent that he really loved some spirit of Art which his "puppets," his "fables," as he called them, served.

Is Anderson, with all his mid-American distrust of intellectualized love, really so far from Henry James? He is strikingly the perpetual adolescent in love with love rather than with a specific girl with changing flesh. One can see him dreaming after his dream-girl even as he approached old age. His romantic chivalry, his lust for the proletariat, his fantastic correspondence in which the letters seem to be written to himself, no matter how touching their apparent candor and earnest reaching out—is he perhaps the other side of the coin of his accusation against Henry James? To be the novelist of lovers who did not dare to hate—this too is a limitation. He seems obliged to love others as a function of his own faulty self-love, and therefore his love of others seems *voulu*, incomplete, and his moments of hatred a guilty self-indulgence. He presents an extreme case of the imperfections of an artist just because of the disparity between his intentions and his performance. He wanted to love, he wanted to sing of love. His failures help to make still more brilliant his achievements in certain of the stories of Winesburg, in "The Egg," and in scattered paragraphs, stories, and sections of novels.

For the fault of bookish derivations for his feelings, Anderson substituted at his worst the fault of self-indulgent derivation from gratifications and dreads never altered after boyhood. He carried his childhood like a hurt warm bird held to his middle-aged breast as he walked out of his factory into the life of art. The primitive

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emotions of childhood are the raw material of all poetry. Sometimes the indulgence of them to the exclusion of the mature perspectives of adult life prevents Anderson from equalling his aspiration and own best work.

But this is a vain quibble. Who can do his best work always? What counts is the achievement, not the failures, however exemplary they may seem to a critic. "I have a lot I want to tell you if I can," he wrote in a letter. "I am writing short stories." The faults of unevenness, egotism, lazy acceptance of ideals, and romantic self-glorification are as nothing against the realized works of art which force their way through. Sherwood Anderson "added to the confusion of men," as he said of the great financiers and industrialists, the Morgans, Goulds, Carnegies, Vanderbilts, "by taking on the air of a creator." He has helped to create the image we have of ourselves as Americans. Curtis Hartman, George Willard, Enoch Robinson, all of the people of Winesburg, haunt us as do our neighbors, our friends, our own secret selves which we first met one springtime in childhood.

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ERICH KÄSTNER

Kurzgefasster Lebenslauf

Wer nicht zur Welt kommt, hat nicht viel verloren.
Er sitzt im All auf einem Baum und lacht.
Ich wurde seinerzeit als Kind geboren,
eh ich's gedacht.

Die Schule, wo ich viel vergessen habe,
bestritt seitdem den grössten Teil der Zeit.
Ich war ein patentierter Musterknabe.
Wie kam das bloss? Es tut mir jetzt noch leid.

Dann gab es Weltkrieg, statt der Grossen Ferien.
Ich trieb es mit der Fussartillerie.
Dem Globus lief das Blut aus den Arterien.
Ich lebte weiter. Fragen Sie nicht, wie.

Bis dann die Inflation und Leipzig kamen.
Mit Kant und Gotisch, Börse und Büro,
mit Kunst und Politik und jungen Damen.
Und sonntags regnete es sowieso.

Nun bin ich zirka 31 Jahre
und habe eine kleine Versfabrik.
Ach, an den Schläfen blühn schon graue Haare,
und meine Freunde werden langsam dick.

Ich setze mich sehr gerne zwischen Stühle.
Ich säge an dem Ast, auf dem wir sitzen.
Ich gehe durch die Gärten der Gefühle,
die tot sind, und bepflanze sie mit Witzen.

Auch ich muss meinen Rucksack selber tragen!
Der Rucksack wächst. Der Rücken wird nicht breiter.
Zusammenfassend lässt sich etwa sagen:
Ich kam zur Welt und lebe trotzdem weiter.

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Translations by JEROME DENNIS ROTHENBERG

Autobiography

For those who weren't born, it's all the same.
They perch above some tree in Space and smile.
Myself, I never thought of it. I came,
A nine-months child.

I spent the best part of my life in school,
Cramming my brain till I forgot each word.
I grew into a highly polished, model fool.
How did it happen? I really never heard.

The war came next (it cut off our vacation).
I trotted with the field artillery now.
We bled the world to ease its circulation.
I kept on living. Please don't ask me how.

Inflation then, and Leipzig, and a whirl
Of Kant and Gothic and Bureaucracy,
Of art and politics and pretty girls,
And Sundays it was raining steadily.

At present I am roughly 31,
And run a little poem factory.
Alas, the greying of my hair's begun,
My friends are growing fat remorselessly.

I plop between two chairs, if that's appealing,
Or else I saw the bough on which we sit.
I wander down the garden-walks of feeling
(When feelings die) and plant them with my wit.

I drag my bags around despite the pain.
The bags expand. My shoulders grow unsure.
In retrospect, permit me to explain:
That I was born. And came. And still endure.

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Die sehr moralische Autodroschke

Er brachte sie im Auto nach Haus.
Sie erzählte von ihrem Mann.
Er wusste, sie sähe entzückend aus.
Doch blickte er sie nicht an.

Sie fuhren durch die Alleen der Nacht.
Am Steuer sass irgendwer.
Die Sterne hatten sich hübsch gemacht.
Die Alleen waren ziemlich leer.

Und wenn das Auto Kurven nahm,
dann trafen sich ihre Knie.
Und wenn er ihr allzu nahe kam,
dann zitterten er und sie.

Er sprach von einem Theaterstück.
Das klang ein wenig gepresst.
Sie sprach von ihrem Familienglück.
Ihre Stimme war nicht sehr fest.

Stets spürte er ihren Blick auf sich,
obwohl er durchs Fenster sah.
Und plötzlich wurde sie ärgerlich
und meinte, sie wären gleich da . . .

Dann waren sie eine Weile stumm.
In der Luft verbarg sich ein Blitz.
Doch fand er schliesslich das Ganze zu dumm
und erzählte ihr einen Witz.

Die Luft war mild. Und das Auto fuhr.
Es roch nach Glück und Benzin.
Sie achteten wenig auf die Natur
und streiften sich mit den Knien.

Dann Stiegen sie aus. Er gab ihr die Hand.
Und ging. Und fand alles gut.
Doch als er daheim im Zimmer stand,
zetrampelte er seinen Hut.

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The Moral Taxi Ride

They found a taxi. He took her home.
She spoke of her husband the while.
He knew she had power to charm him, some.
He didn't as much as smile.

They rode down the midnight thoroughfare.
While somebody sat at the wheel.
The stars had painted their faces fair.
The streets were empty and still.

And when the taxi swung around curves,
Their knees just managed to touch.
And it was plainly a case of nerves,
Whenever it swung too much.

He recommended a show to see.
His manner was slightly forced.
She spoke of her lovely family.
Her voice sounded thin and lost.

And though he looked out of the window, he knew
That the gaze she gave him was steady.
And she was suddenly troubled too,
And thought, "We are there already."

Then both of them didn't speak for a space.
Above them, some lightning broke.
The thing was awkward. He felt that the place
Was right for a funny joke.

The air was mild. And the taxi ran.
It galloped on faith and fuel.
They didn't think Nature could do them a damn,
But rubbing knees was cruel.

So at last they got out. He gave her his hand.
And went. And left it at that.
Though later, at home in his room, he would stand
And kick a hole in his hat.

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Selbstmord in Familienbad

Hier bist du. Und dort ist die Natur.
Leider ist Verschiedenes dazwischen.
Bis zu dir herüber wagt sich nur
ein Parfüm aus Blasentang und Fischen.

Zwischen deinen Augen und dem Meer,
das sich sehnt, von dir erblickt zu werden,
laufen dauernd Menschen hin und her.
Und ihr Anblick macht dir Herzbeschwerden.

Freigelass'ne Bäuche und Popos
stehn und liegen kreuz und quer im Sande.
Dicke Tanten senken die Trikots
und sehn aus wie Quallen auf dem Lande.

Wo man hinschaut, wird den Augen schlecht,
und man schliesst sie fest, um nichts zu sehen.
Doch dann sieht man dies und das erst recht.
Man beschliesst, es müsse was geschehen.

Wütend stürzt man über tausend Leiber,
bis ans Meer, und dann sogar hinein,—
doch auch hier sind dicke Herrn und Weiber.
Fett schwimmt oben. Muss das denn so sein?

Traurig hängt man in den grünen Wellen,
vor der Nase eine Frau in Blond.
Ach, das Meer hat nirgends freie Stellen,
und der Mensch verhüllt den Horizont.

Hier bleibt keine Wahl als zu ersaufen!
Und man macht sich schwer wie einen Stein.
Langsam lässt man sich voll Wasser laufen.

Auf dem Meeresgrund ist man allein.

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Suicide in the Family Bath

Your spot is over here. And Nature's there.
Between you, all the trappings you could wish.
When suddenly you notice in the air,
A perfume made of sea-weed and of fish.

And there, between your eyeballs and the sea,
(The sea is longing to accept your glance)
An endless crowd is running aimlessly.
The prospect arms your heart to their advance.

Emancipated bellies and behinds
Are propped in countless poses on the sand.
Fat aunts who tear off every stitch that binds
Turn into waves that beat against the land.

No matter where you look, your eyes go bad.
You shut them tight. You hope the scene will stop.
Instead you first distinguish this from that.
You now decide that something must be up.

You tumble over bodies like a demon.
And when you reach the sea, you even dive.
Once more you come on dumpy men and women.
You know fat floats on top. But must it thrive?

Sadly the green waves lift you through the air.
You drift below some blond girl's waiting nose.
The sea has no free spaces anywhere.
And people block what view the clouds disclose.

So drowning is your last extremity.
You make yourself as heavy as a stone.
Then let the water pour in gradually.

Only beneath the sea is one alone.

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Meyer IX. im Schnee

Der Schnee hängt wie kandiertes Obst im Wald.
Es war ganz gut, dass ich gleich gestern fuhr.
Den Bäumen sind vielleicht die Füsse kalt . . .
Doch was weiss unsereins von der Natur.

Der Schnee, das könnte klarer Zucker sein.
Als Kind hat man oft ähnliches geglaubt.
Wieso fällt mir das heute wieder ein,
und weshalb überhaupt?

Vorher sind Wolken da. Und nacher schneit's.
Wie aber kommt der Schnee da erst hinauf?
Die Welt ist, wie gesagt, von grossem Reiz.
Man passt nur gar nicht auf.

Die kleinen Flocken tanzen ein Ballett,
und viele grosse Berge sehen zu.
Das schneit und schneit! Die Erde liegt zu Bett.
Und kaltes Wasser hab ich auch im Schuh.

Wenn man so ganz allein im Walde Steht,
begreift man nur sehr schwer,
wozu man in Büros und Kinos geht.
Und plötzlich will man alles das nicht mehr!

Ich las, es soll die ganze Woche schnein.
Für einen Menschen, der auf sich was hält,
ist es nicht leicht, im Schnee allein zu sein.
Da wackelt, eh er's denkt, die ganze Welt.

Na ja. Schon gut. Dort fliesst ja auch ein Bach
und tut, als gäb es weiter nichts als ihn.
Es ist so furchtbar still. Mir fehlt der Krach.
Die ersten Nächte lieg ich sicher wach
und möchte nach Berlin.

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Meyer IX in the Snow

The snow hangs from these woods like candied fruit.
A good thing that I set out yesterday.
That tree has likely got a frozen foot . . .
Though when it comes to Nature, who can say?

That snow, now, should be something like rock candy.
For children such fine thoughts are natural.
Why should they come up now that they're unhandy?
Or wherefore come at all?

Now clouds should always come before it snows,
But over here the snow's the first thing out.
That the world's attractive, everybody knows,
But what's it all about?

Those pretty snowflakes dance out overhead.
The burly mountains watch the stuff they do.
The snow comes down! The whole world lies in bed.
And now I've got cold water in my shoe.

Being alone in forests should disclose
That almost no one understands
Why people go to offices or shows.
Who wants them after all? I wash my hands!

For all I care, this snow could just go on.
And yet a man who cares about his calling
Won't find it easy in the snow, alone.
Before you get to think, your whole world's falling.

So that's the way it goes. That stream out there
Runs on, as if no one was here but him.
It gets so awfully still. I miss the blare.
The first few nights I'll lie awake and stare,
And dream about Berlin.

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Ball im Osten: Taglich Strandfest

Lauter Engel in Trikots.
Lauter Brüste und Popos.
Ohne Halt und Barriere,
folgend dem Gesetz der Schwere,
hängt die Schönheit bis zum knie.
Und beim Tanzen zittert sie.

Jeder Tisch hat Telephon.
Und da läutet es auch schon.
Was sie sagt, klingt recht gewöhnlich.
Später kommt sie ganz persönlich.
Und sie drückt dich zielbewusst
an die kuhstallwarme Brust.

Nach der Tour schleppt sie dich gar
auf ein Sofa in die Bar.
Ach, die Frau ist schlecht vergittert,
und du siehst, womit sie zittert.
Ungewollt du blickst ihr tief
bis in ihr Geheimarchiv.

Sinnlich beisst sie dich ins Ohr,
Säuft Likör und knöpft dich vor.
Nichts am Manne ist ihr heilig.
Was sie hat, das hat sie eilig.
Als du, zu diskretem Zweck,
rauswillst, lässt sie dich nicht weg.

Oben auf der Galerie
sei es dunkel, flüstert sie.
Und sie schürzt die Hemigloben,
nickt dir zu und klimmt nach oben.
Deutscher Jüngling, scher dich fort!
Stürz nach Hause! Treibe Sport!

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Gala Ball at the Seashore: An Everyday Scene

Squeezed into tights, each angel passes
Through a world of busts and arses.
Subject to no strict decree
But the Law of Gravity,
Beauty hangs around their shins,
Shaking when the dance begins.

Phones that ring at every table
Render things communicable.
Frozen phonemes on the wire,
When she joins you, turn to fire,
And premeditated draw you
Where her blazing udders thaw you.

The dance is done. You disappear
On a sofa in the rear.
You find, by peeping through a grating
In her dress, what does the shaking.
Then, like a spy whom no one sent,
You glimpse her darkest document.

And recklessly she bites your ear,
Twists your buttons, guzzles beer.
Nothing male to her is holy,
Doesn't like what comes too slowly.
But when a scruple makes you stray,
Presses you until you stay.

In the gallery above,
As darkness falls, she whispers "love."
Then, pushing up her hemispheres,
She waves at you, goes up the stairs.
German boy, don't wait, be off!
Get right back home! And take up golf!

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Modernes Marchen

Sie waren so sehr in einander verliebt,
wie es das nur noch in Büchern gibt.
Sie hatte kein Geld. Und er hatte keins.
Da machten sie Hochzeit und lachten sich eins.

Er war ohne Amt. So blieben sie arm.
Und speisten zweimal in der Woche warm.
Er nannte sie trotzdem: "Mein Schmetterling."
Sie schenkte ihm Kinder, so oft es nur ging.

Sie wohnten möbliert und waren nie krank.
Die Kinder schliefen im Kleiderschrank.
Zu Weihnachten malten sie kurzerhand
Geschenke mit Buntstiften an die Wand.

Und assen Brot, als wär's Konfekt,
und spielten: Wie Gänsebraten schmeckt.
Dergleichen stärkt wohl die Phantasie.
Drum wurde der Mann, blitzblatz! ein Genie.

Schrieb schöne Romane. Verdiente viel Geld
und wurde der reichste Mann auf der Welt.
Erst waren sie stolz. Doch dann tat's ihnen leid,
denn der Reichtum schadet der Heiterkeit.

Sie schenkten das Geld einem Waisenkind.
Und wenn sie nicht gestorben sind . . .

Sachliche Romanze

Als sie einander acht Jahre kannten
(und man darf sagen: sie kannten sich gut),
kam ihre Liebe plötzlich abhanden.
Wie andern Leuten ein Stock oder Hut.

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A Modern Fable

Theirs was the extra-special love
That quarter-novels tell you of.
He was flat, and she was flatter.
They married, laughing like a hatter.

He had no job. But, bright or bleak,
She boiled potatoes twice a week.
He dubbed her "pretty butterfly."
She made a baby at every try.

They lived in health on furnished floors.
The babies slept in dresser-drawers.
On Christmas Eve, in a short-hand scrawl,
They painted presents on the kitchen wall.

And ate their bread like pastry-pie.
And played at roasted-goose-in-the-sky.
The fantasies grew so healthy and strong,
That the man was a genius before very long.

He wrote quarter-novels. Made a fast buck.
Was the world's richest man, with a little more luck.
At first they were proud, but grew more and more sad
When the money disrupted the times they had had.

So they gave it away to an orphan-baby.
And, if only they hadn't died then, maybe . . .

Realistic Romance

When they had been friends for eight long years
(And, one must admit, pretty good friends at that)
Their long-love suddenly disappeared,
Like someone else's umbrella or hat.

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Sie waren traurig, betrugen sich heiter,
versuchten Küsse, als ob nichts sei,
und sahen sich an und wussten nicht weiter.
Da weinte sie schliesslich. Und er stand dabei.

Vom Fenster aus konnte man Schiffen winken.
Er sagte, es ware schon Viertel nach Vier
und Zeit, irgendwo Kaffee zu trinken.—
Nebenan übte ein Mensch Klavier.

Sie gingen ins kleinste Café am Ort
und rührten in ihren Tassen.
Am Abend sassen sie immer noch dort.
Sie sassen allein, und sie sprachen kein Wort
und konnten es einfach nicht fassen.

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Their hearts grew sad, though they smiled it through.
They played at kisses as if they lied.
And stared at each other. What else could they do?
At length, she wept. He remained at her side.

Outside their window, the boats were lined.
He remarked it was almost a quarter past four,
A little bit into their coffee-time.
And someone was playing a piano next door.

So they went to a small cafe. They stirred
Their coffee-cups and reclined.
By evening nothing new had occurred.
They sat alone, without speaking a word,
Or having an answer in mind.

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JEROME DENNIS ROTHENBERG

A Note on Erich Kästner

"*Difficile est saturam non scribere.*"

Somewhere in Erich Kästner's novel, *Fabian*, the protagonist remarks, "Wir leben provisorisch: die Krise nimmt kein Ende!" "We live tentatively, the crisis is endless." As a poet, Kästner, whose main reputation outside Germany rests, oddly enough, on a series of novels for children, has gone perhaps as far as any contemporary man of letters in picturing the various aspects of this crisis in human conduct and existence. In spite of this, his place as a poet remains practically unknown here; and in spite of his apparent link to certain major currents of contemporary English verse, his poems seem thus far to have escaped the homage of translation.

Erich Kästner was born in Dresden in 1899, and became, in the 1920's, one of the major figures of Germany's New Realism (*Die Neue Sachlichkeit*). Most of his major poetry dates from this period (1927 to 1933)—as well as *Emil und die Detektive*, a juvenile novel translated into some twenty-five languages; several other works for children; and the thoroughly different fictional narrative, *Fabian: The Story of a Moralist*. In 1934, all of Kästner's books, except *Emil*, were publicly burned (the burning of that other sinister work was delayed a year), and his writings were proscribed. Nevertheless, he was permitted to publish outside of Germany, a right he kept till 1942. Soon after the war, he began writing for the magazines *Neue Zeitung* and *Pinguin*, and, residing in Munich, helped found two cabaret-revues, *Die Schaubude* in 1945 and *Die Kleine Freiheit* in 1950. His most recent book of verse, *Die 13 Monate*, consists of a group of calendar poems. It was published last year (1956).

The most immediately discernible aspect of Kästner's poetry is the remarkable insight and sensitivity he exhibits towards the doings (and undoings) of the ordinary German, a fact that accounts in part for a national popularity that found his poems selling 50,000 yearly copies before their 1934 cremation. He effects a meticulous presentation of place, much like that of John

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Betjeman, or even Auden, both of whom he resembles—an ability to fill his satiric universe with a lot of very specific furniture. His technique is abbreviated, cinematic. Letting image follow image in rapid succession, he captures a mobile landscape of restaurants, hotels, resort cities, trains, steamers, carnival balls, etc. Utilized with a classical precision and pointedness, it is undoubtedly his major resource as a poet. When, then, Kästner says of his refusal to emigrate from Germany during the period of repression, "A writer will, and must, experience how the nation to which he belongs, bears its fate during troubled times," this statement must strike one as an aesthetic, and not merely a social, declaration of allegiance.

Yet this is only a part of the picture, for despite his unquestioned localization, Kästner is far from being untranslatable, the product of a single place and time. The truth seems to be that the great moral crisis which concerns him, and which may possibly have reached its most fantastic and tragic manifestation, to date, on his native soil, is a drama common, in varying degrees, to all of Western civilization in its higher (technological) stages. Like other great comic, or tragicomic, artists, Kästner has created his own image of the contemporary man, the lonely figure who seems to swing between a desire for the companionship of others and a frantic attempt to preserve his singleness. His people are neither brilliantly happy nor heroically tragic; they exist in a sort of shadow world, where something is always getting in the way. When communication breaks down, they march sadly toward suicide or atrophy. Though many of these ingredients are by now familiar, Kästner's treatment of them remains fresh.

Again and again, in his introductions and reminiscences, Kästner speaks of himself as a moralist and satirist, and rests his satire on a concept of attack and exorcism: an outpouring of savage indignation that may—or, just as possibly, may not—result in a catharsis of human pride. In the preface to his collection of pre-1933 poems, *Bei Durchsicht meiner Bücher*, he writes:

> The verses show how things looked before 1933 in the big cities and elsewhere. And they show as well how a young man attempted to sound the warning by use of irony, criticism, scorn and laughter. That such attempts are senseless goes without saying. But it should be equally

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> apparent that the senselessness of these undertakings and the recognition of this senselessness have never yet silenced a satirist, nor can they possibly do so. Unless you burn his books.
>
> Satirists cannot keep silent, because they are schoolmasters. And schoolmasters must act like schoolmasters. Yes, and in the most obscure corner of their hearts, despite all the disorder of the world, a silly, senseless hope blossoms shyly, that men may improve a little—though just a very little—if only you curse, cajole, insult and ridicule them often enough.
>
> Satirists are idealists.

If Kästner plays the schoolmaster, however, it is also his nature to be desperately, passionately distressed by the plight of his pupils. Thus pity merges with irony, and both with terror, and Kästner frankly passes the frontiers of social statement to a tragic view of humanity trapped and tormented by its own half-finished nature, by its too frequent inability to be either good or gay. It is this dark view of existence, extending from the details of his poetry, that raises him to the top rung of his contemporaries.

In transferring Kästner to English verse, one is confronted only secondarily by the problem of transposing locale, since such changes, when necessary, come readily enough to hand. Beyond them, there is the task of maintaining the tragicomic edge of the writing—its premeditated blurring of laughter and tears. I have let Kästner's lines serve as stimuli, richly suggestive sources, expanding or contracting them, altering them or keeping them intact, "Americanizing" them or not, with one dominant criterion in mind; that once the anger and laughter were lost, once the poems stopped being terse and readable, no amount of American detail, used purely for its own sake, could make up the difference. If the reproduction is successful, the result should show a constant pull between the particular facts presented and their deeper implications—the essence of Kästner's own achievement.

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MARVIN SOLOMON

Goliath

On the way over, he trampled ripened wheat
And scattered sheep, being neither
Thoughtful, observant, kind, nor neat—
Conceit commending pipsqueak-reaching haste
To creed the arm mightier
Than the meek. I, on the other side, read Proust's

Remembrance of Things Past, and ate a pear,
Intent on the substance of two sweet worlds
As swung and sampled in hammock air.
Say this for him, he was not mercenary
Or ambivalent; flint knife, halberd,
Harquebus, and zip-gun were child's play

In the armies of his giant hands:
Harp-song, goat-song were anathema to him,
He'd fight them anywhere. The Philistines
Prepared him in their syndicates
Like a boss or cousin, and at the first sprung rhyme
Would send him out—king of pinheads

And the acre-footed—to crush the peaceable
And concordant. I'd heard he hated me
Because one day I'd spelled
Disestablishmentarianism.
My first inkling was a boy who said he saw
A jangling steeple on a plain whose only claim

To churches was the larks' gyrations.
Dipping madeleines in tea, I wondered, and forgot.
Then, people ran the streets like rumors, saying,
Sweeney's coming (Sweeney? Sweeney?—
Who is Sweeney?); some said Juggernaut;
Others, King Kong, a mutation, Superman.

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He's coming for you, they said. I need a drink,
I said. How to deal with this Empire State,
This egotist, this yardarm yokel. Think.
Lutes are useless, devil dolls long-range,
Atom bombs expensive, catapults extinct.
I wished him groveling with mephitic mange.

By then, I felt his seismographic tread, and heard
The tintinnabulation of his snaggled belfry.
The sun went out behind his thunderhead.
Shall I be quixotic, tilt
At this, try reasoning, or flee?
Sling or sing him down? I stood and spelled

Him down. D-I-S-, I said, E-S-T-A-B-,
I shouted, L-I-S-H-M-E-N-T-A-R-I-
A-N-I-S-M, I cried exultantly.
He roared with Mauna Loa rage and opened wide
His Carlsbad mouth, and Eiffel-high,
Choked out K-A-T, and died.

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WILLIAM FROST

Shakespeare's Rituals and the Opening of *King Lear*

In a provocative article, "Shakespeare and the Use of Disguise in Elizabethan Drama"[1], Miss M. C. Bradbrook calls attention to the pervasiveness in Shakespeare's plays of what she terms an "overlaying . . . of dramatic identity, whereby one character sustains two roles." Taken in her broad sense, which includes far more than mere matters of costuming, disguise strikes me as having at least two distinct potential advantages to the Elizabethan, if not to the modern, dramatist. In the first place, it is an obvious extension of the basic theatrical convention according to which a group of human beings, the actors, pretend to be other people for the purposes of the play. Thus disguise has its roots in the very nature of drama, as distinguished from other literary forms. In the second place, in respect to the theatre's relation to real life, disguise, or the understanding that a character in a play is assuming some other role than his "true" one, bypasses a problem of literal verisimilitude and liberates both actor and playwright for more imaginative uses of language, gesture, costume, and action. When Edgar plays poor Tom it is understood as a basic premise that he *is* "counterfeiting" ("My tears begin to take his part so much / They'll mar my counterfeiting"—III, vi, 63-64), so that for performer and script-writer alike the question of "realistic" or documentary presentation of a typical Bedlam beggar is less than urgent. Edgar the son of Gloucester, being neither a professional actor nor a professional social worker, will presumably be acceptable if he plays the Tom o' Bedlam his imagination conceives. Similarly, the lines spoken by a character playing a "false" or secondary role—whether voluntary or involuntary, for Miss Bradbrook treats madness as one form of disguise—are obviously open to heightening, to special rhetorical effects, on the dramatist's part.

An analogous element in Elizabethan drama, it seems to me, is ritual, or what might be called the ceremonial situation. Like disguise, it is probably connected with the nature of dramatic art at its very core, if the theories of anthropologists and classical scholars be correct. And like disguise again, ritual can operate to free both actor and playwright from the demands of strict verisimilitude, for the participants in a rite are assumed *a priori* to act parts and to speak language not simply their own or natural to them as individuals, but traditional or appropriate in some way to a publicly acknowledged occasion. I should like to extend the term "ritual" here to include any speech or situation which will be felt by participants or spectators to be predictable in

[1] *Essays in Criticism* II (1952): 159-168. The phrases quoted are on page 160.

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important respects. In this sense ritual would include not only marriages and funerals, like those in *Much Ado* or *Julius Caesar*; not only prayers, curses, and invocations, like those in *Hamlet* and *King Lear*; not only coronation processions and depositions; not only banquets, dances, masques, and such theatrical entertainments as plays within a play; but also ceremonial arrivals and departures, like the splendid send-off given Antony by Cleopatra in Act I, the "further compliment of leave-taking" between France and Lear, or Cassio's welcome of Desdemona to Cyprus; trial scenes, whether in court, as in *Measure for Measure* and *The Merchant of Venice*, by combat, as in *Richard II* and *King Lear*, or by senatorial investigation, as in *Othello*; obituary announcements and their reception; kisses on the fourteenth lines of sonnets; the swearing of oaths, as in *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Hamlet*; acts of banishment; graveyard visits, such as the "obsequies and true love's rite" of County Paris; and finally scenes in which a ruler holds court, as at or near the beginning of *Richard II*, *Henry IV*, Part I, *Twelfth Night*, *Measure for Measure*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*. All such scenes are capable of greater or less formality on the stage, as the dramatist desires. The preparations for Bolingbroke's combat with Mowbray are extended and stately, the farewell of Hotspur to Kate so abrupt as to amount to an anti-ritual.

Ritual has these characteristics, at least: it is ordinarily public, it is deliberate, and it is presumed to be predictable, in outline if not in detail. When Richard is sent for it is known that he will give up the crown; when Claudius assembles his court he has already decided what action to take against Fortinbras. Such a scene as the opening of *Henry IV*, Part I, has some of the elements of a state-of-the-union message, and some of those of a presidential press conference. Like such throne-room scenes, trial scenes are normally intensely public; and while their outcome—as in *Measure for Measure*—may actually astonish participants and spectators alike, the fact that there will be an outcome, and of a certain kind, is well understood in advance. Since ritual is frequently felt to express simple appropriateness to an occasion at least as much as practical, purposive utility, the sort of language used in it can be heightened in various ways without appearing needlessly artificial; this fact no doubt partly accounts for its frequent appearance in verse-drama especially, whether of the seventeenth or the twentieth century.

The various advantages of ritual to drama, however, probably do not need stressing at the moment. Any one who has seen a good performance of the conjuring scene in *Doctor Faustus* or of the conclusion of the first act of *Heartbreak House* will be aware of its theatrical effectiveness. Furthermore, western theatre has been for so long predominantly naturalistic and anti-ritualistic, and life in America today is so intent on discarding whatever vestigial rituals may still be about (we don't have speeches from the throne, we have fireside chats), that criticism is perhaps occasionally in danger of becoming hypnotized by idealized visions of a more largely ceremonial stagecraft. One particularly ritual-happy critic, for

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example, has observed of *Hamlet* that "on stage, the music and the drums and the marching of royal and military pageantry, are directly absorbing, and they assure us that something of great and general significance is going on."[2] If they only could, how easy to write a tragedy! Or how little eccentric would have appeared the man in the Broadway farce who *liked* to attend commencements! Against the strong intoxication of boom-boom, tramp-tramp dramaturgy perhaps it is time to make the point that, like patriotism, ritual is not enough. In this essay I should like to comment on some of its drawbacks, and to conclude with an example of Shakespeare's power to transcend them.

"The trick of that voice I do well remember," says the blinded Gloucester on being addressed as Goneril-with-a-white-beard; "Is't not the King?" "The trick of that voice"—for all the patterns of imagery, the ironic paradoxes, and the strong concatenated plots, it is still by the tricks of their voices that we remember the Shakespearean tribe, by Falstaff's "They hate us youth" or Regan's "What need one?" But a primary effect of much ritual is to damp down the oscillations of personality, subduing them to the exigencies of what is ceremonial, appropriate, and expected. For me the basic objection to Gertrude's obituary on Ophelia ("There is a willow grows aslant a brook / That shows his hoar leaves in the grassy stream") is not the standard naturalistic one that Gertrude, if she saw all this, should have jumped in and stopped it; but rather that the all-too-appropriate pastoral-cum-phallic imagery in her oration has an inevitably depersonalizing effect on Gertrude herself. There is the same sort of difficulty about the ritual insanity of Ophelia. In a play where the women theoretically account for so much of the motivation of protagonist and antagonist alike, ceremonial decoration may trespass too perilously on the narrow budget of lines allowed to female roles. Early in *Antony and Cleopatra*, on the other hand, the balanced formal appeals of Caesar to Antony and of Pompey to Cleopatra shortly afterwards—the set speeches beginning "Antony, / Leave thy lascivious wassails" and "But all the charms of love, / Salt Cleopatra, soften thy waned lip!"—these appeals seem to me vigorous and functional, for they strengthen one's awareness both of the situation's urgency and of the fissure in Antony's nature. For the moment, tricks of voice in Pompey and Octavius might well be merely diverting; these politicians are here part of a frame, not parts of the picture.

Besides its possible blotting-out effects on individuality of character, ritual also involves the danger of mechanizing action, of replacing possible real significance with an illusion of built-in significance. The very guarantee-in-advance of drama carried by a marriage or a trial may be disastrous; having one's initials engraved on an electric toaster does not essentially "personalize" the operations of the gadget. The more obviously ingenious the contrivance, the greater the danger of its developing into a marionette dance:

[2]Francis Fergusson, *The Idea of a Theater*, Anchor Books, p. 124.

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— Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.
— It is to be made all of sighs and tears,
And so am I for Phebe.
— And I for Ganymede.
— And I for Rosalind.
— And I for no woman.

What might have been an emotion becomes in effect a conundrum.

There is also the temptation for the dramatist to extract an added *frisson* from ritual by interrupting it, as when the King throws down his gage in *Richard II*, the bridegroom answers "No!" in *Much Ado About Nothing*, or an unexpected guest appears for dinner in *Macbeth*. As for the first of these three occasions, I do not know if it has been pointed out that John of Gaunt's get-in-there-and-fight-son speech to Bolingbroke ("God in thy good cause make thee prosperous! / Be swift like lightning in the execution. . .") consorts somewhat oddly with the fact, made clear later in the scene, that Gaunt has known all along what Bolingbroke's real fate is to be: that is, banishment, not a chance of death at Mowbray's hands.[3] Nor can the weak staginess of the lists-at-Coventry scene be well defended, in my opinion, on the grounds that it adumbrates a fatal staginess in Richard's nature; it exists in the play all too clearly for its own theatrical sake, whatever the incidental advantages to characterization. I am inclined to make a similar point about the elaborate trial scene in *The Merchant of Venice*. If Portia has really discovered a law that any alien who plots against the life of a Venetian forfeits his own property, and if Shylock's original bond with Antonio really constituted such a plot in the meaning of this early Mundt-Nixon-like legislation, then all the previous manoeuvering that followed her appearance in the scene, including the "quality-of-mercy-is-not-strained" speech, the interchanges about "a Daniel come to judgement", and so forth—all this is in danger of remaining manoeuvers, not war; and manoeuvers with cleverly painted wooden guns, at that. If Shylock has really walked into such a standing trap from the outset—though a trap mysteriously unapparent to the best legal minds in Venice, until Portia's arrival—where is the celebrated "mercy" in duping him into supposing that his bond with Antonio has been for one instant valid?

The standard answer to such logical objections is that the very order of events on the stage will prevent an audience, swept on from crisis to crisis, from ever raising them; and I agree that it is only when the reel is run through backwards, so to speak, that the patching becomes apparent. But even allowing that the two scenes I have just cited carry their own illusion with them, they still illustrate, in my opinion, ritual running away with a play for the moment and substituting its own kind of gaudy satisfaction for the deeper satisfactions of drama. The interlock-

[3]Kittredge, however, believes that the council-meeting to decide on the banishment takes place on stage during a trumpet flourish just after the king intervenes and prevents the fight.

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ing trial scenes that make up the last act of *Measure for Measure*, though more elaborate and far less naturalistic than the trial in the *Merchant*, seem relatively successful, being sustained by previous allegorical elements in the play's structure and theme. Furthermore (and I think the point a crucial one) we as audience do not discover only at the conclusion of the trial that the Duke has had the answers all in his pocket in advance; we know from the start of the act that he has them, and we know what they are. Compared to each other, the two trial scenes show a development away from merely sensational suspense, and toward maturer irony.

Even in *Measure for Measure*, however, the kind of dramatic interest attaching to the various final revelations and dispensations remains at a further remove from life than the kind attaching to those earlier scenes in which Angelo confronts Isabella, or Isabella Claudio. It is no accident, I think, that the greatest poetry of the play is concentrated in the first half, while conflict reigns and before planning has taken over. The play's enormous concern with the nature of justice, the probing of motive, and the clash between surface and depths perhaps sustain the transition to allegory and the various *coups de théâtre* of the ritualistic finale; but in the transition, passionate individuality gives way before the iron march of pattern, and human beings in whose dilemmas we have been invited to sink our consciousness suddenly become presented to us from the outside, like figures (as indeed they now are) in a comedy. Ritual triumphs, but its triumph is a symptom of something that has happened to the play.

Probably no scene in any of Shakespeare's mature tragedies is more overtly ritualistic in construction and in language than the holding of court that opens *King Lear*; all the force of Dryden's comment on rime in drama—that it will sound as though the speakers in a dialogue had got together and composed it in advance—would seem to apply to this gathering. First Lear speaks, announcing fully and formally what is about to happen; then come the questioning of the daughters in order of age; the breakdown of the four-part liturgy (challenge, response, comment, award) on its third performance; the ceremonial quarrel with Cordelia, followed by formal disinheritance; the ceremonial quarrel with Kent, followed by formal banishment; Kent's elaborate farewells; the public rejection of Cordelia by Burgundy; her ritual wooing by France; and a cluster of antiphonal farewells as the court breaks up. Except for Cordelia's sudden "Nothing"—a violent momentary break in the proceedings—the scene, even at its most passionate moments, is conducted in blank verse of a Byzantine stateliness, if not, indeed, in rime:

> Thy dow'rless daughter, King, thrown to my chance
> Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.
> Not all the dukes in wat'rish Burgundy
> Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me.

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It used to be fashionable to call couplets not unlike those of France —at least when produced a century or so later by Pope or Dryden— frigid and lifeless; and indeed as recently as 1927 Professor Allardyce Nicoll has written that "One could have wished it were possible to prove that these lines were not by Shakespeare or that they were remnants of an earlier *Lear* of his callow youth, but we may accept them I think, as his own, manifesting in their stiffness and mental rigidity the dramatist's recognition of his own failure to make his scene live and his obvious desire to push on to more congenial subject-matter." For Nicoll, as a matter of fact, the whole first scene of *Lear* is "a failure" and "easily the most uninteresting long scene of the drama." Here, surely, by contrast to the point of view of some more recent critics, we find modern uneasiness with ritual, and opposition to it, stated in the most uncompromising terms.

What can be said in defense of the scene?

In the first place, if it must be viewed as allegory, then as allegory, at least, it holds together extremely well. Its basic constituents are simply two contests of affection, the first among Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia, the second between France and Burgundy. That the second is a neat and ironic commentary on the first comes out in France's courteous lines to the reluctant Burgundy—

> My Lord of Burgundy,
> What say you to the lady? Love's not love
> When it is mingled with regards that stand
> Aloof from th' entire point. Will you have her?
> She is herself a dowry.

The aphorism about the nature of love, though not so intended by France, who was absent from the earlier contest, sums up the moral issue involved in that contest, and prepares for the appropriately religious formality of France's ensuing proposal:

> Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;
> Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd. . .

To the level of the preceding action no other style of declaration could possibly be adequate. It is no wonder that Granville-Barker finds "an actor of authority and distinction" requisite for this briefest, but not least important, of roles in the scene.[4]

In the second place, the balanced ceremony of the scene accords well with the mythic, the folkloristic nature of the story as it came down from the old chronicles to Shakespeare: the story of an ancient king of Britain who had three daughters, of whom two were evil, and one was good. Such fairy-tale materials, of course, underlie more than one of Shakespeare's plots, and he has various ways of handling them;

[4] *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1947), I, 32ln.

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here, his method is the simplest and boldest possible; all questions of motivation are bypassed at the outset, and we start with the naked myth. For given such a myth, to raise the question of motive would be to undermine dramatic effect in advance. As the earlier play *King Leir* surely demonstrates sufficiently, any conceivable rationalization is bound to be weak and inadequate.

In the third place, the machine-like quality of ritual produces, in the first part of the scene, precisely the effect of nightmarish inevitability most useful, I think, for certain sorts of tragedy. The driver is fully and terrifyingly in control of the car; every piston functions smoothly; and the road ends in a precipice just around the next corner. Any suggestion of deliberation, hesitation, or wavering between alternatives would but confuse and perplex the appalling spectacle.

I have so far mentioned only elements *within* the scene. There is also the question of its relation to the play as a whole, a relation mainly one of several sorts of contrast. In the first place there is the contrast, well commented on by S. L. Bethell among other critics, between the rituals and their framework, those brief prose interchanges between Kent and Gloucester before the ceremonies start and between Goneril and Regan after they conclude. The prose dialogues are casual, colloquial, and the reverse of mythic in atmosphere. Because they allude to the motivation of the central figure in the rites, without really attempting to explain it, they give the effect of going backstage and hearing the actors comment on the play. By this means the gap between ritual and more naturalistic drama is bridged, at the same time that ritual itself is thrown into high relief.

Second, there is the contrast between Lear's courtroom and Goneril's household, where we get our second look at the king. In the household, action and imagery alike are trivial, domestic, and haphazard; again the effect is of going backstage, where fancy dress is partly thrown off, make-up smudged, and wigs awry. This effect is only temporary, however; for tension rises throughout the scene till at its close, in curses and quarrel, Lear is evidently remounting an imaginary throne—how pathetically and ironically imaginary Goneril's reassurances of Albany remind us. The Lear who had disinherited Cordelia and banished Kent retains a power of banishment, but only over himself.

The third contrast is with the storm-and-madness scenes at the center of the play. In these Lear, now unable to distinguish imaginary thrones from real ones, pardons Gloucester for adultery and pronounces a death sentence on Kent for treason:

> KENT [*speaking of Edgar*]—He hath no daughters, sir.
> LEAR—Death, traitor! nothing could have subdu'd nature
> To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.

In these scenes are embodied one enormous parody after another of the ritualistic opening of the play. Of the trial scene in the farmhouse

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Granville-Barker remarks: "Where Lear, such a short while since, sat in his majesty, there sit the Fool and the outcast, with Kent whom he banished beside them; and he, witless, musters his failing strength to beg justice upon a joint stool. Was better justice done, the picture ironically asks, when he presided in majesty and sanity and power?" (p. 294). The trial scene in the farmhouse, moreover, is followed immediately by a yet more monstrous parody, the justice done on Gloucester by Regan and Cornwall.

Disorder of various sorts is basic to these central scenes. It is no longer as though we had passed backstage to observe the actors in their dressing gowns, but as though the theater itself had suddenly been shaken by an earthquake, and the actors were improvising amid falling masonry. They seem continually to grasp for some shred of ceremony as the boards tremble beneath them and the footlights flicker uncertainly. "Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer," Lear beseeches the blanketed Edgar in the farmhouse. "Though well we may not pass upon his life / Without the form of justice," begins Cornwall at the trial of Gloucester, towards the end of which two stagehands, panic-stricken, suddenly refuse to cooperate longer, and one of them hastily murders the chief actor. On the cliffs of Dover, even scenery has to be openly improvised out of nothing.

The final contrast is between the opening and the conclusion of the play. At this conclusion, both in the reunion with Cordelia and in the final spectacle, ritual has lost all relevance to the King. His "I am a very foolish fond old man, / Fourscore and upward" is like Cleopatra's "No more but e'en a woman, and commanded / By such poor passion as the maid that milks / And does the meanest chares"; but it is more final than Cleopatra's self-regarding momentary dethronement. We are now in the presence, not of the ceremonies by which human beings encompass their condition, the *rites de passage* of the anthropologists; but of the barest facts of that condition itself. King and daughter, no longer figures in myth or allegory, come before us fragile, irreplaceable, and particular, a pair of jailbirds and losers.

Meanwhile, however, the earthquake is subsiding, and the stage getting swept up so that orderly drama can go forward. Act V is emphatically not without ritual, the chief rite being, of course, the trial by combat which restores Edgar to status and inheritance, eliminates Edmund, and leaves the political field clear for Albany at last. Many commentators have analysed the double plot structure of *King Lear*, mostly in regard to its universalizing effect on the conflict of the generations; another important result of the subplot is that it keeps everybody so busy, especially at the end of the play. Wars have to be fought, traitors unmasked, and a final contest of affection adjudicated between Regan and Goneril, whose love-rivalry for Edmund ironically parallels that of France and Burgundy for Cordelia earlier, just as Edgar's restoration restores some semblance of order to the judicial processes of primitive

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Britain. So much has been happening, in fact, that Kent creates a sensation by showing up on the stage and asking for his master. "Great thing of us forgot!" cries Albany, stupefied; "Speak Edmund, where's the King? And where's Cordelia?"

This moment in the play, which some have criticised as fortuitous, melodramatic, and contrived, needs to be regarded in the light of the ritual which started the whole chain of events in motion. In that opening scene, everything depended on Lear and Cordelia; around the conflict of their wills the fates of nations, literally, revolved. Now, they are of no importance; no role is left to them; what happens to them scarcely matters; it is as though they had been dropped from the play. Contrast the death of Hamlet, in the instant of Claudius's exposure; or the death of Cleopatra, foiling the purposes of Casear. Left without function in the mechanism of society, Lear will not be, like Hamlet, carried to a stage and exhibited to the tune of a military dead march. He will not be given a few last words, like Othello, about the service he has done the state. Nor can Cordelia be arrayed liked Cleopatra in the robes and crown of a princess and made to embrace her death as a bride embraces a bridegroom. So "formal and megalithic"[5] at the beginning, these two personages have passed beyond ritual altogether at the close. They cannot be expressed or comprehended by any of its forms—this fact is their greatness and their tragedy.

[5]Granville-Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 271: "[the opening scene] has a proper formality, and . . . a certain megalithic grandeur. . . ."

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B. H. HAGGIN

Ballet and Opera Chronicle

IN THE PROLOGUE OF *The Sleeping Beauty*—at the Royal (formerly the Sadler's Wells) Ballet's final performance of its recent New York engagement—one saw a succession of solos by accomplished and engaging dancers in the roles of the lesser fairies; then one saw dancing by Svetlana Beriosova as the Fairy of the Lilac that had an additional authority, force of presence and projection, control, and the quiet achieved by the physical strength that concealed effort. But then came the first act and the first appearance of Margot Fonteyn, who exhibited an even more impressive authority, force of presence and projection, and control, and an additional absolute precision achieved with elegant quiet that was spectacular in its unostentatious way. All of which brings us to the first of the opulences made possible by subsidy—the large, well-trained, well-rehearsed company which dances with easy assurance and precision and with engaging sweetness and good manners, and whose style is epitomized in the elegance of carriage and movement of its great ballerina. And the other opulences which subsidy provides are the rich mounting and careful preparation of the company's productions.

All these resources contributed to the brilliance of the reconstructions of two great classics of Russian imperial ballet with beautiful scores by Tchaikovsky, *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake*, with which the company placed us in its debt when it first came here. *The Sleeping Beauty*—staged by Nicholas Sergeyev, with a few revisions of his choreography mostly by Frederic Ashton, and with the scenery and costumes of Oliver Messel—remains the company's most beautiful achievement. *Swan Lake*, when I saw it again in 1953, had the Sergeyev production revised by Ninette de Valois, whose deadening choreographic hand was one reason for the unimpressiveness of the groupings and movements of the *corps de ballet* this time; but in addition they were made to seem insipid by Balanchine's excitingly imaginative and beautiful invention in his new version of Act 2, and by the sharply defined and energetic execution of his choreography by the dancers of the New York City Ballet, as against the softness, amounting almost to flabbiness, of the general dancing style of the Royal Ballet.

Recently the company has placed us further in its debt by its reconstructions of two great Diaghilev classics with beautiful scores by Stravinsky: two years ago *The Firebird*, and this year *Petrushka*. The restoration of the Fokine choreography was done by Liubov Tchernicheva, for many years one of the principal dancers of the Diaghilev company, and Serge Grigoriev, its regisseur. As against Balanchine's *Firebird*, which had reduced and changed the action to fit Stravinsky's reduced score and the modest size and resources of the New York City company, the Royal Ballet's revival of the Fokine version offered the pleasures and effective-

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ness of its greater amplitude—the amplitude of Stravinsky's original score, precise in its luxuriance, of the original story line, of Gontcharova's scenery and costumes, of the profusion of dancers on the stage in the dance of Kostchei's subjects and the finale. And with these there was Fokine's choreography, whose occasional old-fashioned-looking groups and movements one accepted as part of a whole that included things as original and imaginative and effective as the *pas de deux* of the captive Firebird struggling in the arms of Ivan Tsarevitch. Altogether a richly satisfying experience.

In the *Petrushka* the crowd milled about in the opening scene very much as always; but the first dance of the three puppets gave me an impression of clarification and, in some details, of freshness and newness that I continued to get from the scenes in Petrushka's and the Blackamoor's rooms and the succession of dances in the final scene. The performance I saw had an excellent Blackamoor (Gary Burne) and Showman (Franklin White) but a Petrushka (Brian Shaw) and a Ballerina (Maryon Lane) who were humans with puppet-like characteristics rather than puppets with intimations of human emotions; and it did not therefore produce the effect of the less accurate performances years ago with Lazovsky as Petrushka. But it did show what happened in the piece and what would be effective and moving if done by dancers like Lazovsky and Danilova—which made it another satisfying experience. And the group dances of the nursemaids and coachmen in the final scene were excellent, with brilliant moments contributed by the two stable boys (Ray Powell and Basil Thompson).

The company also has presented similarly richly mounted and carefully prepared productions of works by living choreographers—more accurately, living British choreographers (it hasn't performed here the one Balanchine ballet in its repertory, *Ballet Imperial*). The most distinguished of these is Ashton; and the most distinguished of his achievements remain the two masterpieces of dance comedy that the company offered in its first visits: *Façade*, to the music of William Walton, and *Wedding Bouquet*, to the music of Lord Berners and the words of Gertrude Stein. The other works of Ashton that we have seen here have included pieces as dull as *Daphnis and Chloë* and *Sylvia* or as downright trashy as this year's *La Péri*, and abstract classical ballets like *Homage to the Queen* that have exhibited no more than the ingenuities of a resourceful craftsman, but others like this year's *Birthday Offering* in which the invention operated with the life and the effect of art.

In its first seasons here the company performed the ballets of Ninette de Valois, which more recently it has spared us; this year it presented new works by its younger choreographers John Cranko and Kenneth MacMillan. I can report only on MacMillan's *Noctambules*, which exhibited imaginative dance invention in the carrying out of its dramatic idea of a theatre-hypnotist who hypnotizes his audience and falls under his own spell. The piece had striking scenery and costumes by Nicholas Georgiadis and pointlessly ugly music by Humphrey Seale.

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Opera in New York this season began with a concert performance of Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* by the American Opera Society, which for several years has been giving the public opportunities to hear works that are rarely or never performed in the opera house, such as Gluck's *Paride ed Elena*, Rossini's *Otello* and Bellini's *I Puritani*. It had its greatest success with Cherubini's *Medea* two seasons ago: not only with the work, which revealed Cherubini as the composer of remarkably beautiful and expressive dramatic melody and powerful supporting orchestral figuration, but with Eileen Farrell's singing of the enormously demanding title role—the range and flexibility, the thrilling power and ear-ravishing delicacy exhibited by the voice that she manipulated in breathtaking fashion in her shaping of the long phrases. *Anna Bolena* provided no surprising revelations: described in the program as Donizetti's first important success, it offered at its best, in the later scenes, writing comparable with that of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, beginning with a quintet at the end of the second scene which had something of the characterizing individualization of the parts in the Lucia sextet; but until this quintet Donizetti achieved in the first two scenes nothing more than an unexcitingly routine exercise of his style.

In addition to the opera the occasion offered two singers who had not been heard before in New York. An audience which knew the brilliant mezzo-soprano Giuletta Simionato from records not only gave her a warm welcome when she appeared for her first aria but applauded overenthusiastically after singing in which the manner was authoritative but the voice cold, threadbare and tremulous. And even after her more beautiful singing later, and after the singing of the young Negro soprano Gloria Davy—made impressive by the security of the lovely voice in the long florid phrases and climactic high notes—there was something excessive and hysterical in the prolonged uproars that brought the performance to a standstill. It was regrettable to see this first appearance at the Society's concerts of the indiscriminate hysteria over singers that has been one of the disturbing manifestations, at the Metropolitan, of the deterioration in taste. (The demonstrations at the Metropolitan have been elicited equally by the beautiful voice of Tebaldi, the unpleasant voice of Del Monaco, the wobbly, yowling remains of the once lovely voice of Milanov; the public has yelled its approval of singing by Tebaldi like that of singers fifty years ago who considered the performance an occasion to show off the loveliness of their voices without any concern about the damage to musical continuity; and the public that has been sent into frenzies by this self-indulgent singing of Tebaldi has been unmoved by Steber's use of her beautiful voice with a musical discipline and style that has made it the greatest singing one has heard at the Metropolitan.)

Concert performances at which, guided by a synopsis of the dramatic action, one listens to its realization in the music are, I have found, a satisfying way of hearing opera. And the American Opera Society's dramatic underlining of the musical performance by having the singers

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make entrances and exits and address each other has been good. But carried to the point of having Kenneth Smith in tails passionately seize Simionato in a costume-like evening gown in front of the orchestra in dinner jackets, it caused the audience, rightly, to laugh.

Opera continued with the season of the New York City Opera Company, whose financial troubles in recent years have been the occasion for fancy thinking—discussions, for example, of its place in New York musical life. The factual record indicates that its place in the beginning and until recently was simply that of an organization offering opera at popular prices; and it sold out first with *Tosca*, *Carmen* and *Martha*, then with an ever wider-ranging repertory of the standard and the unusual, old and new. In some instances it succeeded with works—e.g. *Die Meistersinger*, *La Cenerentola*, *Wozzeck*—that one would have thought were beyond its resources; in some—notably *Aida*—it attempted something it couldn't bring off; in some—*Turandot*, among others—it did what was not worth doing; and among the things not worth doing were the American works it offered, with the exception of Copland's *The Tender Land*. The public filled the City Center for all of these indiscriminately; then it stopped doing so a few years ago, for reasons I don't pretend to know. Nor do I know what audiences the company attracted this year with the popular repertory, or with Falla's *La Vida Breve* and *El Amor Brujo*, or with *Turandot*, or with two operettas—*The Merry Widow* and *Die Fledermaus*—which are not the proper concern of an opera company, or with Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*, whose fluently unoriginal music didn't deserve the production, the public's interest and the critics' praise that it got last year. I can only report that the City Center was crowded at the performances of Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio* and Verdi's *Macbeth* I attended; and I presume that what filled it each time was the opportunity to hear an infrequently performed work of major stature.

The performance of *The Abduction* justified the audience's interest but not its enthusiastic applause; for this work turned out to be beyond the company's resources—its vocal resources, that is, since it had been able to use Robert Fletcher's handsome scenery and costumes for the 1956 Stratford Festival production. A performance of *The Abduction* stands or falls by its singers for Constanza and Blonda, whose taxing high florid passages must be sung with assurance and bravura; and Virginia Haskins, though her voice was small, used it with a security and authority that made her a moderately effective Blonda; but Beverly Bower, the Constanza, sang the phrases of "*Martern aller Arten*" as sequences of agreeable sounds without any incisiveness of articulation and inflection or force of style. Robert Rounseville, an excellent singer for most operatic purposes, was able to produce Belmonte's lyrical phrases only with evident effort instead of the easy flow they require; but the less demanding part of Pedrillo was sung more adequately by David Lloyd, and Osmin was sung best of all by Herbert Beattie. In addition to singers the

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work needs a first-class conductor; but this performance had Peter Hermann Adler, who gave the music no saliency of shape or style.

One would have supposed *Macbeth* to be beyond the company's vocal resources in its demand of a soprano with the combination of range, power and agility required by the part of Lady Macbeth; but Irene Jordan turned out to be impressively equal to her task. There were also a good Macbeth, Aureliano Neagu, and good singers for the lesser roles; excellent sets and costumes by Andreas Nomikos and unusually effective staging by Margaret Webster; and, most exciting of all, the pacing and shaping of the music by the conducting—flexible, poised, precise and authoritative—of a new young Italian, Arturo Basile. This time the audience's enthusiasm was justified: the company had never done anything more creditable than its production of this extraordinary early work of Verdi, in which one hears him now operating conventionally in the styles of the period and producing a chorus of witches or assassins or a cabaletta that is laughably unsuited to its expressive purpose, and now operating creatively in his own style in relation to such purpose, and in one instance, the Sleepwalking Scene, doing so with a freedom and incandescent power in the vocal and instrumental writing that places the scene among such later achievements as Philip's soliloquy in *Don Carlo*.

With the crudeness of early Verdi, then, *Macbeth* has pages of orchestral and vocal writing which exhibit an art in the use of the resources of the medium that is evident—increasingly enriched and refined—in the later operas: in this early work this art is limited, but it is unmistakably there. And one hears another art of this kind—working with fastidious precision and taste in the selection and combination of elements in the complex of line, color, texture and mass—from the first phrase of the lovely and expressive music of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, with which the Metropolitan Opera opened its season. My guess is that the work's two ball scenes made it, for Mr. Bing, a good choice for the festive occasion of opening night; and he gave it a richly mounted production designed by Rolf Gerard, staged well by Peter Brook and conducted effectively by Mitropoulos. He also gave it what he considered some of his best singers: George London as Onegin, Richard Tucker (replaced by Giulio Gari, whose lyric tenor is more suitable, in the performance I attended) as Lenski, Giorgio Tozzi as Gremin; but he assigned the central role of Tatiana to Lucine Amara, whose voice was unsuitably cold and metallic and whose appearance and acting did not, for me, create convincingly on the stage either the shy country girl or the splendid Princess Gremin. But by now it is an old story that Mr. Bing exhibits excellent judgment and taste which every now and then fail him and us; and in the *Onegin* production an egregious lapse resulted in the unprecedented potpourris of thematic material of the opera put together by Julius Berger and played while the curtain was down for changes of scene: they were suggested by Mitropoulos, but the suggestion should have been rejected by Mr. Bing. In addition, because of his continued employment of

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Zachary Solov one didn't see the peasants in the first scene and the guests of Mme. Larina and Prince Gremin later on dance as one might believe they would, but instead saw them execute contrived and artificial-looking "choreography." It says a great deal for Tchaikovsky's opera that it was able to triumph over these flaws in the production, and over being sung in English, which when one strained to hear it was a distraction from the music, and when one succeeded in hearing it was a further distraction and annoyance with its rhymes.

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Reviews

NORTHROP FRYE

Neo-Classical Agony

MR. WAGNER'S BOOK[1] is an excellent study of one of the "men of 1914," as Wyndham Lewis styled the group of Joyce, Pound, Eliot and himself. The approach is critical rather than biographical, although one important biographical detail does emerge: Lewis was born in the same year as Joyce, a fact which he seems to have concealed, but which must have been known to Joyce when he made Lewis the basis of his Shaun figure. Much has still to be done on Lewis's biography: Mr. Wagner could not have done it without writing a different kind of book, but he clearly feels that the key to the contradictions in Lewis's character and thought is biographical rather than critical. The book is divided into four parts. The first, "Politics," obviously put first in order to get *that* out of the way, deals with such things as the Hitler book and its recantation; the second, "Art," with Lewis's critical journalism; the third, "Time," with his larger cultural reflections, and the fourth with his work as a satirist. Lewis is studied throughout as a literary figure, and it is his opinions about art rather than his practice as a painter that Mr. Wagner stresses.

The disadvantage of such an approach is that it deprives Mr. Wagner of a centre of gravity. Lewis's painting usually makes sense; much of his writing does not, partly because writing with Lewis was a hobby, as painting was with D. H. Lawrence, though a hobby which he cultivated with such energy that it came to overshadow the main art. Many features of his writing are those of the amateur. He never mastered—never tried to master—the art of expository prose, and the insincerity in his journalism is mainly due to the fact that he does not have the technical equipment to be sincere. He cannot make words express a precise meaning: he showers his reader with a verbal offensive, with what the accurate schoolboy phrase calls shooting a line. A passage quoted by Mr. Wagner reminds us how much of Lewis's prose is couched in the huff-snuff rhetoric which is a non-occult form of automatic writing:

> Ours has been in the West a generation of hypocrites... a generation that has shown less care for men in the mass than any for a great many centuries, combining this demonstrable indifference to the welfare of the generality with never-ceasing hosannas to the Common Man: a generation of power-addicts who put on a red tie with a

[1]WYNDHAM LEWIS: A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS THE ENEMY, by *Geoffrey Wagner*. Yale University Press. $5.00.

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> smirk, climb upon the back of the Working Class and propose to ride it to a new type of double-faced dominion. . .

In reading even the best of expository works, one feels in contact with an acute, witty and erudite mind, yet these books are unusually difficult to finish. There are two reasons, I think, for this. One is their inconclusiveness: they never seem to make a memorable or rounded point except when they are attacking some other writer. The other is their lack of rhythm: one bores one's way along a deafening unaccented clatter of words until one can stand the noise no longer.

Such a style, though largely useless for exposition, has its points as a style for satire, founded as it is on invective and parody, and Lewis's theory of writing is chiefly a rationalization of his satiric style. The theory is that his approach is external and spatialized, in contrast to that of Joyce (whom he considers only as a stream-of-consciousness writer), and more particularly Gertrude Stein, who writes "like a confused, stammering, rather 'soft' (bloated, acromegalic, squinting and spectacled, one can figure it as) child," and who is "just the german musical soul leering at itself in a mirror, and sticking out at itself a stuttering welt of swollen tongue." The difference in kind from his own style implied by such remarks does not of course exist: his is simply another highly mannered rhetoric, and it would be easy to think up similar epithets for it. Lewis maintains that his own approach is consistently concerned with the outsides of people, paying attention only to the visible "ossatures," in contrast to the emotional and temporal fumblings for a dark and soft interior. His definitions of his own aims, however, in the flat antithetical form in which they are presented in *Men Without Art*, are sheer idiocies: space is better than time; the outside is better than the inside; painting is better than music, and so on and so on. Besides, the human body not being crustacean, its ossature is inside anyway.

Even Lewis, however, can hardly be unaware of the badness of his metaphors: he adopts them because they give a general idea of his tradition. This is the line of intellectual satire represented by Petronius (one of the nearest to him technically), Rabelais, certain aspects of Dickens, and the Flaubert of *Bouvard et Pecuchet*, which he imitates to some extent in *The Human Age*. Satire is based on a moral attitude—there is a half-hearted effort in *Men Without Art* to argue that satire need not be moral, but it soon breaks down—and the basis of this attitude is frequently an assumed contrast between a moral norm that is pragmatically free and flexible, and behavior that appears grotesque because it is obsessed, or bound to a single repeated pattern of action, like Jonson's "humor". The obvious metaphor for the latter is the machine or puppet, and Lewis' characterization deliberately reduces his characters to mechanisms. Mr. Wagner has an interesting table of the number of mechanical and crustacean images Lewis uses for his characters: there are certainly more than enough to make the point. In the light of this the image of the external ossature makes more sense: a machine does have such a

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thing, and in studying a machine only its external behavior need be examined; it has no inner essence or soul-stuff. Lewis, in contrast to Lawrence, associates mechanical behavior with the primitive, the "wild body" which cannot attain the disciplined freedom of civilized man.

When we compare Lewis with other satirists in his tradition, we notice that his metaphor has in one respect led him astray. One element in writing is the rhythm of narrative, the inner pulsation and continuity in the style that keeps one turning the pages. Lewis's theory would doubtless oblige him to condemn this as an internal or temporal quality in writing, but unfortunately for the theory, structural rhythm is the real skeleton or inner ossature of writing. His neglect of it brings the defects of his expository style into his satires. If we look at *The Apes of God*, we see a use of catalogues and set repetitive passages, like the split-man's litany, that remind us of similar things in Rabelais. But in Rabelais there is a sweeping rhythmical power that carries them off, and Lewis has no power of rhythm. Words merely cover and congeal one scene after another; his writing is the opposite of his painting, a kind of literary pointillism. For this reason even his best satires seem to me books more likely to be admired than read. Anybody can see that they are remarkable, even astonishing books; but they give a not wholly unjustified impression of being themselves the kind of clever mechanical imitation that they present as grotesque. The exuberance of Rabelais (and Swift and Joyce) results from a rigorous discipline which is also a professional competence in their art. Lewis has this discipline as a painter, but writing he has approached externally; and when his theory extends from a technique of satiric presentation to a technique of writing satire, caricature becomes self-caricature, and the book as a whole resembles a Cartesian ghost caught in its own machine, trying to break out of a closed circle of parody. Lewis speaks of D. H. Lawrence's painting as incompetent Gauguin: partisans of Lawrence might retort that much of Lewis's writing reads like delirious Dickens. For one is often reminded of the way in which Dickens allows his facility in caricature to take over the style of writing, and produce the prodigies of unplausible melodrama that mark his lapses.

The same contradiction exists in Lewis's personal publicity. Lewis appears to think of the role of the artist in terms of an anti-Communist redefinition of a proletariat, anti-Communism being one of the few attitudes that Lewis has consistently maintained. The genuinely declassed person, for Lewis, is the detached or withdrawn observer. Such an observer has a continuity in his attitude that most people, stampeded as they are by the pressures of news and propaganda, lack; he is more radical than the crowd, yet he is deeply conservative too, for the crowd, being plunged into the time-spirit, is restless for constant change, this being what Lewis calls the attitude of the "revolutionary simpleton" in the arts. The crowd wants the kind of art that reflects itself: art which glorifies the primitive, the child or the ordinary or inarticulate common man, as in the Chaplin films and in Hemingway's "dumb ox" characters;

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art which follows the endless associative burble of the inner consciousness, as in the interior monologues of Joyce and Stein; art which tends to approximate, in one way or another, the communal dance, the art which encourages a sense of participation by the untrained, or of what Lewis calls the "dithyrambic spectator". All this is in contrast to the detached contemplation necessary for the Egyptian and Chinese art that Lewis (like Gauguin) prefers to the modern West, where we realize that art is not self-expression but the expression of something disinterested, a "Not-Self". Such views are common to an anti-Romantic or "neo-Classical" group of artists, both English and French, whose precepts and personnel Mr. Wagner ably outlines. The true artist thus becomes the "enemy" of society, for he must either declare war on it or be crushed by its hostility.

We seem to be close here, Mr. Wagner suggests, to a theory of a creative elite. Lewis says he holds no such view, and Mr. Wagner has got to the point of feeling that this is fairly good evidence that he does. Still, Lewis's denial points to some uncertainty in his mind. The real meaning of "elite" is "people like me," and nearly everyone believes in an elite in the sense that nearly everyone with any social function at all will tend to think of that function ideally, as something on which society as a whole depends. For artists the conception of an elite normally begins in the establishing of schools and trends and manifestoes aimed at waking society up to the importance of their art. But with the artist the conception of "people like me" changes, as he becomes less fond of rival artists and more attached to the people who buy and appreciate his work, into the political question of what kind of public would make *his* art elite. The change for Lewis is accelerated by his insistence that most people have no right to participate in the arts and by his increasing jealousy of almost every widely acclaimed contemporary. Finally, the conception "people like me" modulates into "people who like me," a society recreated in one's own image, which has at least the advantage of permitting a more authentic form of creative life.

All three phases are clearly marked in Lewis. The first phase is the period of "vorticism" and the *Blast* manifestoes. Lewis was clearly fascinated by Marinetti's use of the new techniques of advertising and publicity stunts in an art movement. He sent a copy of *Blast* to a friend with a letter quoted by Mr. Wagner, apologizing for its noise but asserting that the artist cannot exist at all without such things—a statement one may beg leave to doubt. The second phase compels Mr. Wagner to deal with the shoddy story of the flirtation with Fascism by British and French intellectuals. The "neo-Classical" group favored a type of relatively unpopular art, and such art could win its place only through some kind of established authority, hence their speculations were largely concerned with what kind of authoritarian government would be most useful to them. The result was a series of self-contradictions (matched, of course, by similar ones in the Communist camp) unparalleled in the history of the arts, and Lewis's writings afford an excellent area for observing them.

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In Lewis, as in others of the neo-Classical group, anti-Romanticism seems to be a late Romanticism fouling its own nest. The Romantic decadence glanced at in Lewis's *Diabolical Principle* seems merely to expand into a more political form of experimenting in sado-masochism. The genuine statements in neo-Classical theory are mainly of Romantic origin. Mr. Wagner shows that Lewis's theory of satire is lifted almost bodily from Bergson's *Le Rire*—an excellent place to go for a theory of satire, except that Bergson is one of the two philosophers most violently attacked in *Time and Western Man*. In any case the contrast between organism and mechanism is a Romantic commonplace, going back to Goethe and Coleridge. The other target of *Time and Western Man* is Spengler, and the framework of Lewis's pronouncements on contemporary culture comes straight out of Spengler. Lewis's polemical writings are in a relatively modern genre—Spengler calls it the diatribe—which was largely created by Victorian Romanticism, though Milton and Swift had practised the form earlier. It was Romanticism that brought in Lewis's notion of a special type of creative man, superior to others not simply in his particular expertise, but in general, in his whole attitude to life. This conception of the superior person is expounded particularly in Carlyle, whose Teufelsdröckh is a professor of things in general.

Our own age has inherited from this the conception of the "intellectual," who produces, in the line of duty, the "calling-for" book, the pseudo-political treatise that "calls for" various shifts of attitude in society, and is the modern form of Spengler's diatribe. It is based on the Romantic assumption that if one's expertise is in, say, poetry or fiction, one's reaction to the morning paper will show an infinitely more searching insight than the reaction of one whose expertise is in greasing cars or curling women's hair. I imagine that this assumption has still to be substantiated: in any case Lewis's political writings provide little evidence in its favor. Of the four men of 1914, Joyce, after his adolescence, remained almost entirely aloof from this kind of intellectualized journalism; Pound fell for it hard, which is one reason why he reads so like a late Victorian. Eliot has also yielded to the temptation to write the odd diatribe, but has had the literary tact to keep the musings of *After Strange Gods* and *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture* at least overtly out of his poetry and drama. But even in this addled century there are few phenomena more strange than Lewis's fanatical addiction to the diatribe.

Mr. Wagner speaks of the influence on Lewis of Benda's *Trahison des Clercs*, yet his diatribes are a flagrant example of what Benda means, an artist deliberately vulgarizing critical and philosophical ideas, deliberately deserting the field of his expert knowledge for a field where nobody knows anything because there are no facts. Lewis condemns the "dithyrambic spectator" in art only to become one himself in society. Lewis thinks of art as aloof, unpopular, exact and difficult: his diatribes are slovenly, cliché-ridden, confused and embarrassingly personal. Lewis is anti-Communist, yet if we ask what is wrong with Communism,

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one of the most decisive answers is that it adopts Lewis's technique of communication. Lewis speaks of continuity as the feature that makes for dignity in life: his polemics shift ground so often that it becomes almost uncharitable to remember what he said last Tuesday. The assumption in most of the political writings is that the one form of society which makes such writing possible—a tolerant bourgeois democracy—is the most contemptible of all social structures. But when we find Lewis urging in 1936 that Germany should be allowed to rearm (and urging the opposite in 1942, Mr. Wagner notes), we feel less grateful for the tolerance that allows him to write than for the indifference that makes him relatively harmless.

Again, as a satirist one would expect Lewis to lampoon the popular ideals of the English, their devotion to sport and fair play, their pride in having a sense of humor, and so on. The villain of *The Human Age* is a cliché expert known as the Bailiff, whose appearance, recorded on Michael Ayrton's jacket design, recalls Punch. Yet this attitude exists beside another which is its direct opposite, apparently motivated by some feeling of guilt at being declassed by art, and which at every stage has followed a Colonel Blimp line. *Tarr* reflects the popular anti-Germanism of the First World War; in the twenties Lewis is explaining that Stein, Joyce and *transition* are really "shams," that there are too many homosexuals in modern art, and that cubism is largely humbug; as the political situation darkens he becomes pro-Fascist and ridicules the color-cult which is part of the reaction against white supremacy; in 1939 he abruptly takes a democratic line on Nazis and Jews; in 1941 he completes the circle by writing *Anglo-Saxony: a League that Works.* Even in religion, on which he says little, we still find him sucking his own blood, like the Ancient Mariner. He believes in Something Upstairs, rejects Catholicism with some respect, and treats Protestantism with great contempt, as was usual in diatribes of his generation. But the dead end of Protestantism is not capitalistic exploitation or bourgeois prudery or any of the things that intellectuals' lay sermons say it is; the dead end of Protestantism is the intellectual's lay sermon.

If these diatribes formed, as Lewis is not unwilling to suggest, a deliberate masquerade, behind which the serious writing of the "Not-Self" takes place, or if the diatribes could in any other way be separated from the serious writing, their inconsistencies would not matter. They cannot—*The Childermass* in particular is a diatribe in fictional form—and the inconsistencies of the one become a kind of split creative personality in the other. The masquerade theory ascribes an impossible degree of subtlety, in any case, to a most unsubtle writer. Lewis ridicules the archetypal approach to fiction, yet his most memorable characters are culture-myths, some of them, like Kreisler in *Tarr*, largely of newspaper origin. He nags at homosexuals, yet shows a curious distaste for the normal relation, and his women resemble Asiatic mother-goddesses as they might have been described by the prophet Elijah. One would expect his "external" approach to have some affinity with realism, as

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in Flaubert; but anything like a setting in a Lewis satire becomes a fantasy of Grand Guignol proportions. The Parisian left bank in *Tarr*, the Bloomsbury-Chelsea London of *The Apes of God*, the Toronto of *Self Condemned* (if the reader will accept the opinion of a reviewer who lives there) are all as far out of this world as the limbo of *The Human Age*.

What is one to make of a writer who hates everything, with the unvarying querulousness of a neurotic, that his own writing represents? The easy way out is to decide that Lewis must be some kind of phony. Even Mr. Wagner has twinges of wondering whether his subject has really been worth his pains, and speaks of Lewis's "constant, almost paranoid, lust for destruction". Certainly one cannot study Lewis in detail without exasperation, but that is true of many writers, and though he has uniformly substituted cleverness for wisdom, still no one can read *The Human Age* carefully and feel that its author has no real place in literature. The better solution is to take all Lewis's theories as projections, realizing that he is an almost solipsistic writer, whose hatreds are a part of him because he understands nothing of what goes on outside his own mind. As Stephen Spender pointed out in a hostile but shrewd critique of Lewis, that is what his external approach really amounts to. No one better manifests Yeats's dictum that we make rhetoric out of the quarrel with others, poetry (read satire) out of the quarrel with ourselves. Lewis's temporary admiration for Hitler thus becomes intelligible: here was someone else lost in a dream, yet with a medium's power of animating and imposing his dream. We come back to our figure of the Cartesian ghost caught in its own machine, which I have partly borrowed from Mr. Wagner. Lewis is the satirist of an age whose drama is a flickering optical illusion in a darkened room, whose politics is an attempt to make clichés into axioms of automatic conduct, whose spiritual discipline is a subjective exploring of the infantile and the perverted. Such books as *The Apes of God* or *The Human Age* can hardly be written without a personal descent into the hell they portray, and Lewis has made that descent, and taken the consequences of making it, with a perverse but unflinching courage.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

The Two Voices of Mr. Eliot

"THESE LAST THIRTY YEARS have been, I think, a brilliant period in literary criticism in both England and America. It may even come to seem, in retrospect, too brilliant. Who knows?" So Mr. Eliot, characteristically giving with one hand what he takes back with the other, concludes his latest American lecture;[1] even though he won't tell us outright, *he* knows how brilliant is too brilliant; and we are invited to recall, wryly, that it was our sixty-year-old smiling public man who, forty years ago, began to provide the critical oeuvre and the poetic practice without which neither the brilliance nor the very fact of this efficient age of criticism is conceivable.

There is no use ignoring the confusion between Eliot the poet-critic—great and legitimate successor to Dryden, Johnson, and Coleridge—and Eliot the Dean of English Letters. The confusion exists; it was created by Eliot himself in his earliest published criticism; the portentous and slippery authority of what Eliot himself has called his "*Times-Literary-Supplement*-leading-article manner"[2] obscured, in 1919, the revolutionary originality of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" as, in 1956, it frock-coated the platform cuteness of "The Frontiers of Criticism," in which Grandfather Eliot takes his licks at the earnest academic critics who regard themselves, with some justice, as his only true heirs. Dylan Thomas once remarked to a *New York Times* book reviewer that when Eliot wrote prose it was good honest prose with no poetic nonsense about it. Pound, having more faith in the good sense of poetry, has less in the evasions of Eliot's diaconal prose, which finally provoked a Poundian snort: "Grapes in a barrel of sawdust!" The proportion of sawdust to grapes has always been a matter of concern for the serious reader of Eliot's criticism.

What, for instance, is one to make of the *conclusion* to "The Three Voices of Poetry"?

> For the work of a great poetic dramatist, like Shakespeare, constitutes a world. Each character speaks for himself, but no other poet could have found those words for him to speak. If you seek for Shakespeare, you will find him only in the characters he created; for the one thing in common between the characters is that no one but Shakespeare could have created any of them. The world of a great poetic dramatist is a world in which the creator is everywhere present, and everywhere hidden.

[1] "The Frontiers of Criticism," in ON POETRY AND POETS, by *T. S. Eliot*. Farrar, Straus and Cudahy. $4.50.

[2] "A Note on *Monstre Gai*," *The Hudson Review*, VII (Winter 1955), p. 526.

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It is true that "The Three Voices of Poetry," and most of the other pieces in Eliot's new volume, were first delivered as lectures, and some allowance may be made for the diffuseness solicited by a public occasion; but the quality of hollowly amplified classroom platitude in this fluent peroration—Dr. Frank Baxter bringing Shakespeare to the TV audience on a rainy Sunday afternoon—can hardly be attributed to anything less grave than a total lapse of intelligent attention from the subject.

The subject may in fact provide some of the explanation. Until his own dramatic experiments, Eliot was never much interested in poetic drama. His series of essays on the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists apart from Shakespeare were superb closet studies by an essentially lyric sensibility, selections and appreciations of impressive verse extracts rather than attempts to elucidate the relations between verse and dramatic action This bias Yvor Winters has harshly characterized as "Mr. Eliot's sentimental and semi-critical interest" in the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, and it plays a part in Eliot's overrating of them as dramatists. In two essays in the new volume, however, two of the latest—"Poetry and Drama" and "The Three Voices of Poetry"—Eliot explicitly undertakes to vindicate, or at least to describe, his own plays according to a more comprehensive theory of poetic drama; only the theory is about as thin as the practice ("Lavinia, may I have a piece of toast?"), and will scarcely strike anyone as making up what was lacking in his earlier essays on the drama. The theory would be interesting if it could be thought of as having issued in first-rate drama; but Eliot's account of his procedures in working out the action of *The Cocktail Party* does not help, reminding us as it does of the air of glacial contrivance in the play itself. The theory might also be interesting if it seemed to enlarge our understanding of poetic drama as a genre; but in its particulars—that the audience must cease to be conscious of the medium, that prose is as artificial as verse, that the dramatist must sympathize with all of his characters in order to create them, that the two pitfalls of the "poetic dramatist" are the assignment of poetic lines to inappropriate characters and the failure to keep the plot moving, that as spectators of poetic drama we ought not to be "transported" into "an imaginary world totally unlike" our own, but "on the contrary, our own sordid, dreary daily world" ought to be "suddenly illuminated and transfigured" —in these particulars, the theory seems to be directed neither at the working playwright nor at the intelligent spectator, and therefore at nobody except the Dean of Letters' stadium-sized audiences eager for the illusion of easy understanding.

This level of self-protective tranquil banality is uncharacteristic; but the Dean speaks out plainly enough in several of the other essays. "Virgil and the Christian World" is an official, rather perfunctory tribute to Virgil's *anima naturaliter Christiana*; "Goethe as Sage" occupies itself mainly with disavowing Eliot's earlier aspersions on Goethe by setting up an embarrassingly unexamined quality called wisdom, which Goethe is thereupon presumed to possess and to exemplify; the protracted blurb

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on Kipling stumbles from one astonishing perversity of undocumented judgment to the next—Kipling's work "comes to show a unity of a very complicated kind"; "the question whether Kipling was a poet is not unrelated to the question whether Dryden was a poet"; "Kipling's position" among "great verse writers" is "not only high, but unique."

"The Social Function of Poetry" differs in more than the forlorn dignity of its intention. Eliot, in the middle of World War II, is trying to establish, from his not yet consolidated position as a latter-day Arnold, the social importance of the poet in a society which has stopped listening ("When a civilization is healthy," Eliot sadly remarks, "a poet speaks to all"). The essay has a genuine patriotic ring, and makes perhaps the best case that can be made for the intimate relations between the poet as live sensibility and the language as, even in our time, he can modify it for the people who use it daily and will never hear of him; but the tone is justifiably elegiac. We have come a long way since Arnold.

How much has reputation—or the responsibility of reputation—altered Eliot's attitude toward the critic's job? In the 'twenties, the great decade of his criticism (as well as of his poetry), he wrote about the poets and the critical issues that engaged him immediately in his job of practicing poet. In the 'thirties, he was beginning to write about figures and issues whose interest for him was enjoined by the social responsibility of his growing reputation, which Eliot may regard—with good reason—as the last international reputation available to any poet through the powerful representativeness of his poetry. In the 'forties and 'fifties, the process is, with a few gratifying exceptions, virtually complete: the poet is lost in the public man, and that always disquieting carapace of the Eliotic prose style has thickened into a means of shutting out fresh perception. The tone is opaquely official; disingenuousness, special pleading, waspish authoritativeness, elaborate confessions of humility—all of them, in the earlier Eliot, rhetorical devices in the strategy of maneuvering the reluctant reader into a closer look at the object—have become themselves the chief visible objects; almost nothing serious remains beyond what can be assimilated into the social obligations of the public man on the platform.

The disingenuousness in "What Is a Classic?" is of special interest. Certainly, Eliot's particular aim of establishing Virgil as the classic of the Western world is unexceptionable, and successful on its own terms—though once the terms have been set, one may wonder whether one is arriving at a poet or at a convenient plug in the funnel of literary history. Virgil is "a classic in all senses": "that is not to assert," Eliot adds with uneasy asperity, "that he is the greatest poet who ever wrote—such an assertion about any poet seems to me meaningless" (though Eliot has made assertions about Shakespeare and Dante, on various occasions, that come very near this sort of meaninglessness). A classic poet appears at a time of maturity: maturity of civilization, of language, of literature, of manners; at a time when society has achieved a moment of order and stability. His literature has a history behind it, and his language has

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developed into a common style. He has a comprehensiveness of outlook and a breadth of appeal, he has an awareness of history; in him "the whole genius of the people is represented"; "when a great poet is also a great classic poet, he exhausts the language of his time." Since Virgil is the complete spokesman of the destiny of Rome, and since Rome is at the center of European civilization, Virgil is irremovably the European classic. So we are led to the bottom of the funnel, dimly perceiving that Eliot's criteria narrow us down, with an inevitability matched only by their aesthetic irrelevance, to the one poet for whom they are, it is almost fair to say, retroactively invented: the criteria are, in any case, primarily historical, and Eliot would have a better right to them if he did not seem to regard our dreary acquiescence in an historical fact as acceptance of an aesthetic fact.

By the time the millstones of Eliot's definition have ground down everything between them, we are not likely to be appeased by the one example of Virgil's "maturity" that Eliot allows us—the maturity of "manners" in the underworld encounter between Dido and Aeneas; the poet has come to appear such an impersonal and dogged mouthpiece of history and prophecy that we are ready to give up the classics, now we know what they are. But the disingenuousness goes deeper; or it may come to appear less as disingenuousness than as Eliot's indifference to sustained reasoning, an indifference that has tended to be disguised by the *look* of reasoning on the impassive surface of his style and by the insights that (less and less frequently) break the surface. Arguing hard for Virgil, Eliot must push aside Dante, at least to a less central position: "in the Divine Comedy, if anywhere, we find the classic in a *modern* [italics clearly implied] European language"; and he must dispose altogether of Chaucer, who, though he has many classic qualities, "cannot be regarded in my sense as a classic of English literature," because, though with him we come close to the common style of Virgil and Dante, "Chaucer is using a different, from our point of view a cruder, speech."

Perhaps from Eliot's momentarily very limited point of view cruder; the statement is so question-begging—is Dante's speech, from the contemporary Italian's point of view, comparatively crude?—that one almost prefers to dismiss it as Eliot's failure to remember anything of Chaucer beyond the summaries of the literary histories. Eliot's criteria may, after all, be pertinent: one might propose that Chaucer reflects as much maturity of civilization, of language, of literature, of manners as Virgil (compare Troilus and Criseyde with Dido and Aeneas and see how frigid and inflexible, in the comparison, Virgil is), that he has as much command of a common style, as comprehensive an outlook and as broad an appeal, as thorough an awareness of history as any other poet at all; that he is perhaps more representative of "the whole genius of the people" than any other poet in the world; that Chaucer is the culmination of the High Middle Ages in England as Dante is in Italy; that Dante as innovator made the choice of *his* vernacular over the formal and literary Latin as Chaucer made the choice of his over the courtly

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and literary French of the Plantagenets; that Chaucer as European traditionalist learned from his courtly French and Italian predecessors and contemporaries as Dante from the courtly Provençals; that Chaucer—like Dante, and like every other supreme poet in a language—has no successors, for the classic in a super-Eliotic sense is indeed the poet who has realized all the potentialities of the language, and the language must change—as it had changed by Shakespeare's time—before there can be another. Moreover, this Chaucer is alive, while the Virgil of Eliot's special plea is monumentally dead.

What remains, in the new volume, is much—five essays (though only two of these were written after 1940)—that belongs to the great successor to Dryden, Johnson, and Coleridge. Eliot's tribute to Yeats, "the poet of middle age," is brief and just, the model of a concise memorial statement (and particularly impressive in its rightness considering Eliot's lack of sympathy for the man Yeats). The piece on Byron not only selects and sets in order, with Johnsonian authoritativeness and conviction, the proper commonplaces about Byron, but offers that sort of casual insight which was once the personal stamp of an Eliot essay:

> I cannot think of any other poet of his distinction who might so easily have been an accomplished foreigner writing English. The ordinary person talks English, but only a few people in every generation can write it; and upon this undeliberate collaboration between a great many people talking a living language and a very few people writing it, the continuance and maintenance of a language depends. Just as an artisan who can talk English beautifully while about his work or in a public bar, may compose a letter painfully written in a dead language bearing some resemblance to a newspaper leader, and decorated with words like "maelstrom" and "pandemonium": so does Byron write a dead or dying language.

There are, finally, the essay on Dr. Johnson and the two great essays on Milton.

The essays on Milton have been so often discussed, and so often misrepresented, that it might be adequate merely to note the more patent misrepresentations. In the first place, "Milton I" is not a denigration of Milton but an appraisal of his influence ("although his work realizes superbly one important element in poetry, he may still be considered as having done damage to the English language from which it has not wholly recovered"), and an attempt to make as explicit as possible the distinction—which most readers have felt, and many have suppressed in the interest of temporary enthusiasm or of obeisance to the literary histories—between Milton on the one hand and, on the other, Homer and Dante and Shakespeare, in whose company he is often (as by Arnold) unhesitatingly placed.

In the second place, "Milton II" is not a recantation of "Milton I" but rather a very deliberate footnote. It takes, as Eliot concedes, two to

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make an influence, and Milton can hardly be held accountable for being an "injudicious choice of a model." This time, besides, Eliot is careful to document his sense of Milton's greatness: "it is his ability to give a perfect and unique pattern to every paragraph, such that the full beauty of the line is found in its context, and his ability to work in larger musical units than any other poet—that is to me the most conclusive evidence of Milton's supreme mastery"; and he notes "the peculiar feeling, almost a physical sensation of a breathless leap, communicated by Milton's long periods, and by his alone."

Nevertheless, Milton is "as a poet . . . the greatest of all eccentrics"; "his style is not a *classic* style, in that it is not the elevation of a *common* style, by the final touch of genius, to greatness. It is, from the foundation, and in every particular, a personal style, not based upon common speech, or common prose, or direct communication of meaning. . . . There is no cliché, no poetic diction in the derogatory sense, but a perpetual sequence of original acts of lawlessness." Not that Eliot is merely exalting the common style, with its implications of directness and maturity, at the expense of others, except as a necessary phase in one of the life-cycles of the language: "verse should have the virtues of prose, ... diction should become assimilated to cultivated contemporary speech, before aspiring to the elevation of poetry." And he concludes that by the time of his second essay "poets are sufficiently liberated from Milton's reputation"—through the efforts, of course, of Pound, Leavis, and Eliot himself—"to approach the study of his work without danger, and with profit to their poetry and to the English language." The Milton scholars are still huffing at Eliot on Milton, but the points he makes remain uncontroverted.

In "Johnson as Critic and Poet" Eliot is not, for a change, concerned to defend or to rectify; he is assessing a major figure of the past in the spirit of Johnson himself, with the authority conferred upon him by his age's acknowledgment of his eminence. Eliot observes that if Johnson's satire, *London*, fails because Johnson is a moralist without compromise and lacks "a certain divine levity," *The Vanity of Human Wishes* succeeds because the meditative poet in Johnson had for once found a subject equal and appropriate to his energies, and the moralist had "found a perfect theme . . . an idea which the reader will not for a moment question"; and he goes on to consider what he denotes as the specialization, rather than the defect, of poetic sensibility that both enabled Johnson to write one of the last great Augustan poems and unfitted him to judge the verse of such un-Augustan sensibilities as Donne and Milton:

> What is lacking is an historical sense which was not yet due to appear. . . . If the eighteenth century had admired the poetry of earlier times in the way in which we can admire it . . . there would have been no eighteenth century as we know it. That age would not have had the conviction necessary for perfecting the kinds of poetry it did perfect.

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The great accomplishment of Johnson's age was the common style: "When standards for a common style exist, the author who would achieve originality is compelled to attend to the finer shades of distinction," and only thus to "stir the emotions of the intelligent and judicious." Johnson's criticism—its limitations, but most particularly its weighty and instructive virtues—bases itself on Johnson's respect for the emotions of the intelligent and judicious, his respect, that is, for the aesthetic canons of an age whose most illustrious and representative critic and poet he himself was; ultimately, it bases itself on his accepted responsibility, in so measured and comprehensive a critical summation as *The Lives of the Poets*, for the preservation of the language and of the specific humane perceptions it embodies and sustains.

At his best, when he wishes or when the subject enforces the operation of his unique powers, Eliot too reminds us of this unremitting responsibility of the poet and the critic; and in the totality of his critical labors, despite his more and more frequent gratuitous complicities with an audience he has learned to entertain too well, he reminds us that the only work comparable to *The Lives of the Poets*, in scope, in discrimination, in the authority of deserved eminence, is that library of criticism of which he has now given us a second volume.

Notes on Contributors *(continued)*

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This is the first appearance of the well-known music critic, B. H. HAGGIN, in the pages of this Review.

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ANTHONY HECHT

Poets and Peasants[1]

OPUS POSTHUMOUS by Wallace Stevens is a big book, containing all the poems he omitted from his *Collected Poems*, or which he wrote after that book was published; as well as two short verse plays, a group of adages or postulates about Art and Life, and some essays appreciative of certain artists and writers, or speculative about aesthetic matters. It represents the work of his whole career, beginning with poems he excluded from his first book, and including one written only a few days before his death. The book is edited by Samuel French Morse, who has written an introduction that is informative, judicious and excellent in every way. I am sure that Stevens could not have wanted anything more of such a volume. And I am sure it is superfluous to bring up the question of whether he would have wanted it at all. He is, beyond all doubt, one of the most gifted and distinguished poets this nation has produced, and that should be enough to invite an interest in anything he has to say. And all the gifts for which he is honored are in evidence here, though in a diminished way. Of the many poems, only a few, like "The Course of a Particular" and "Nuns Painting Water-lilies" for example, sustain their excellence from beginning to end. Almost every one of them, of course, has individual brilliances along the way. Who else could write "The Drum-Majors In the Labor-Day Parade," "Reality Is An Activity of the Most August Imagination," "Artificial Populations," or

Whipped creams and the Blue Danube,
The lin-lan-lone of Babson,
And yet the damned thing doesn't come right.

Boston should be in the keys
Painting the saints among palms.
Charleston should be New York.

And what a good thing it would be
If Shasta roared up in Nassau,
Cooling the sugary air

or

Spring's bright paradise has come to this.
Now the thousand-leaved green falls to the ground.
Farewell, my days.

[1]OPUS POSTHUMOUS, by *Wallace Stevens*. Knopf. $6.75. PROMISES: POEMS 1954-1956, by *Robert Penn Warren*. Random House. $3.00. POEMS, by *Richmond Lattimore*. University of Michigan Press. $3.75. HOT AFTERNOONS HAVE BEEN IN MONTANA, by *Eli Siegel*. Definition Press. $1.65.

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The thousand-leaved red
Comes to this thunder of light
As its autumnal terminal—

A Spanish storm,
A wide, still Aragonese,
In which the horse walks home without a rider . . .

or who else could have thought of writing a poem called "Lytton Strachey, Also, Enters Into Heaven," beginning,

I care for neither fugues nor feathers.
What interests me most is the people
Who have always interested me most . . .

Sadly, most of the poems do not sustain their fun, or their level of feeling and language. But there is something else they *do* sustain, and the editor has very properly observed that the book "is clearly held together by a 'fixed point of view' apparent from the beginning and by an intention that reveals itself with equal clarity in the prose and poetry." This binding force is Stevens' aesthetic doctrine, which is so obsessively present on almost every page that a reader is likely to feel badgered or wearied by the relentless declarations and adumbrations of a single idea. This idea is more complex than any summary statement of mine would do justice to, but it concerns the relationship of the "real world" in its physical and changeable aspects to the imagination which orders and composes this material into a meaningful and harmonious whole. But it is with the act of imagination that Stevens is mainly concerned, with the very beauty of the abstract formulation of things, not unlike Paul Valery's fascination with the Euclidian geometry. And after reading consistently through this book for a while, one feels like shouting for a little meat and potatoes. I suspect his qualifications as a philosopher, and some of the prose pieces are meant to be very philosophic indeed. They are in any case less convincing than even his most doctrinal poems. As for the plays, they are really to be classed among the doctrinal poems, and are plays only by a courteous extension of the word.

And yet, finally, the book represents a dedication so steady and determined and patient as to persuade you of a sort of heroism. Just what sort is hard to say, but I'd like to make a stab at it. William James, in his Gifford lectures, has a sentence that reads: " 'Thoughts are things,' as one of the most vigorous mind-cure writers prints in bold type at the bottom of each of his pages." Now while Stevens is specifically non-religious, or perhaps anti-religious (among the *Adagia* we find, "Poetry is a means of redemption," "It is the belief and not the god that counts," "There is no difference between god and his temple,") and though I leave it to others to dispute with James whether or not the mind-cure movement is truly the religious attitude he allows it to be, I think that

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not only might Stevens have put such a phrase at the bottom of his pages, or at least included it in the *Adagia*, but he also bears in common with the exponents of this doctrine a steadfast confidence in and reliance upon the constructs of the mind. And under the pressure of experience, such a confidence may certainly become heroic. But if thoughts are things, there are still plenty of things that are not thoughts, and the world of Wallace Stevens is often thin for want of them. He certainly realized that his poetry was a particular kind of poetry, and that there were qualities of experience beyond or apart from his literary sensibilities. His knowing this adds pathos to the heroic loneliness of his most serious poems.

Robert Penn Warren is a good novelist, an accomplished critic, a collaborator on several of the most widely used college textbooks of modern times, and through the good box offices of Hollywood, a commercial success. As if this were not enough for any man, he is also a remarkable poet. His poetry creates a special and a strange world, a sort of spiritual No-Man's Land, a condition of trance. And from this rapt center, heroic and crazy little skirmishes are made toward the edges of consciousness or the brink of the limiting present moment to find out what kind of reality lies just beyond. What is discovered is almost always fragmentary, inconclusive, and awful; hints of another order of existence altogether; and never the certainty of which of these worlds is the "real" one. In fact, the forces just out of sight are perfectly capable of retaliation, and make their surprising raids upon the self until all sides are bewilderingly confused. Warren brings off these effects time and time again with a magnificent command of the eerie. This strange welter of states of mind is created for the most part by a skill of diction which few poets could match. But a price is exacted for this kind of success. The settings, the locales, the descriptions are sometimes unconvincing, are absorbed into the language with no regard for their independence, are too patently no more than a state of mind. And when this happens, the language lies heavy upon us like a rhetorical extravagance. For someone with a keen ear for the sound of human speech and the unique ways its music may be adapted to poetry, Warren has indulged himself in some peculiarly awkward lines.

The gull, at an eye-blink, will, into the astonishing
statement of sun, pass.

Beneath pale hydrangeas first firefly utters cold burning.

It is fair to say there are not many lines quite like these, but sometimes in attempting a sad majesty he borrows the cadences of one of his masters:

Great moon, white-westering past our battlement,
Dark sea offers silver scintillance to your sky,
And not less responsive would my human heart be if I
Were duly instructed in what such splendors have meant.

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* * * *

Can it bind or loose, that beauty in that kind,
Beauty of benediction? I trust our hope to prevail
That high-joy in beauty be wisdom, before beauty fail
And be gathered like air in the ruck of the world's wind!

and invites a damaging comparison. And I can make no sense of air being gathered by wind. But with these carping objections out of the way, the fact remains that the overwhelming majority of poems included in this book are absolute and unqualified triumphs, different in intention and effect from the work of any poet I can think of. Here is *Keepsakes*, for example; the second of seven parts of "Ballad of a Sweet Dream of Peace."

Oh, what brings her out in the dark and night?
She has mislaid something, just what she can't say,
But something to do with the bureau, all right.
Then why, in God's name, does she polish so much, and not look in a drawer right away?
Every night, in God's name, she does look there,
But finds only a Book of Common Prayer,
A ribbon-tied lock of golden hair,
A bundle of letters, some contraceptives, and an orris-root sachet.
Well, what is the old fool hunting for?
Oh, nothing, oh, nothing that's in the top drawer,
For that's left by late owners who had their own grief to withstand,
And she tries to squinch and frown
As she peers at the Prayer Book upside down,
And the contraceptives are something she can't understand,
And Oh, how bitter the tears she sheds, with some stranger's old letters in hand!

You're lying, you're lying, she can't shed a tear!
Not with eyeballs gone, and the tear ducts, too.
You are trapped in a vulgar error, I fear,
For asleep in the bottom drawer is a thing that may prove instructive to you:
Just an old-fashioned doll with a china head,
And a cloth body naked and violated
By a hole through which sawdust once bled,
But drop now by drop, on a summer night, from her heart it is treacle bleeds through.
In God's name, what!—Do I see her eyes move?
Of course, and she whispers "I died for love,"
And your grandmother whines like a dog in the dark and shade,
For she's hunting somebody to give
Her the life they had promised her she would live,
And I shudder to think what a stink and stir will be made
When some summer night she opens the drawer and finds that poor self she'd mislaid.

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Just as a generation, now crafty and worldly, once believed that "War and Peace" was written by Clifton Fadiman, a notion which book-clubs and radio programs and Mr. Fadiman's own urbane and tireless eloquence did much to foster, so now there are college students all over the country who rest in the happy confidence that "The Iliad" was written by Richmond Lattimore. And not only "The Iliad": "The Agamemnon," "The Trojan Women," certain Odes on athletic occasions anciently attributed to Pindar, and divers lyrics and fragments. And Mr. Lattimore has cut no public figure in behalf of this idea. It is the dirty work of the colleges. Many a professor of Greek, therefore, will be surprised to find that a new volume has been added to the corpus of great works, but that this one, called "Poems" (by the same hand, of course) resists easy assimilation into the classical canon. For one thing, despite the ancient themes, figures, and allusions, much of the material of the book derives from recent history or personal experience in the modern world. And much of this is described in a wry self-observing humor, or with a lyric wistfulness, and most often both of these combined, in a manner that is not only modern but distinctly Mr. Lattimore's own. The ungraspable present, the furtive, shifting vision, the evasive image and complex moral stance, keep cropping up in poems that seem at the beginning to be somewhat mock-heroic and which end with all the seriousness and dignity that the world's circumstance allows. The history of English literature is not rich in gifted translators who are at the same time good poets themselves; the balance seems always to favor one side or the other. Dryden and Pope are more honored for their own works than for their translations; Golding, North, Florio, are hardly known to us except in the guises of Ovid, Plutarch, and Montaigne. There is a lively and popular suspicion that a man cannot successfully be both, though this is probably at bottom a moral conviction that no man *ought* to be able to be both; and that anyone who has worked at the classics with as much energy and success as Mr. Lattimore must somehow have relinquished his nature to them and to the exigencies and compromises that translating always entails. I know of no way to confute this idea except by insisting that it is put to the test by Lattimore's poems, astonishing in their variety of method and of tone, and that it is scotched in this book forever. On the contrary, an intimate, meditated knowledge of the classics has made it possible for Lattimore to do what hardly any other modern poets have been able to do: to survey some of the most hideous calamities and momentous events of modern times, and to construe them in a way that is neither hysterical nor unreservedly bitter; to consult a deeply earned sense of human proportions in talking about the inhuman aspects which modern life so often seems to wear. He is the only one, for example, who has been able to write about *the bomb* without being cheap; and this is a kind of triumph difficult to imagine and stunning when you read the poem itself. I have read through the book several times, at a loss to decide how the many virtues of this poetry could briefly be represented here, in all their various attitudes of humor and nobility and

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sadness. I've given up, and offer here instead a poem I like no more than many others.

LEGEND FOR A SHIELD

Legend married April and death to breed this
branch of green strength. Trees understand, the rain is
bright accomplice, only our eyes are vexed with sun, nor
perceive it.

Half your destiny is as gold and amber
luminous. Wear this, and reject that iron
frail with use crossbound to your blazon. Be with
leopard and gryphon

clear and fierce in mystery, when the skilled lips
bend across your eyes, and you watch the arms' grace
turn and fold, be history, and the charmed eyes
model your future.

Strike then, innocent and savage, be ware of
April in your star. For a man before you
took the devious way, and his blood remembers
here, in this poem.

Imagine to yourself a hot-blooded, clandestine romance between William Saroyan and Gertrude Stein, and imagine moreover the child of their passion growing up to become a poet himself; and you will have an idea, though an incomplete one, of some of the qualities of Eli Siegel's poetry. His paternal inheritance would be a generous, expansive emotion, vast enough to subsume everything in a kind of sticky good-will. So radical is his disposition to be pleased and to embrace all things in his unmitigated cheerfulness, that many of the poems end quite suddenly, as if the poet had brought us to the very brink of the ineffable and were sitting there smiling at us, not without some smugness, curious to know if we are so rude and insensitive as to suppose there is anything else to be said. Such poems seem to be followed by long silences on our part, the embarrassed response to easy profundity. Joined with this kind of pretentiousness, is a naive and childlike faith that the very act of stating what appears to be wonderful somehow confirms its wonder. The other side of the family has provided a good-humored self-consciousness, a certain clownish seriousness. Here are some examples.

GREEN GRASS AT VICKSBURG ARRIVED AT PROPERLY

All the rolling on the grass that's been, just was.
Whether it was a child rolling on the grass
Or a ball

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Or a kitten,
It's been rolling on green.
It might have been rolling on brown.
There has been such rolling.
When rolling goes on on brown
Brown is seen anew.
We may not think of rolling on brown, quite easily.
So many things are easily not thought of.
To think of General Grant rolling on the grass
Is a service to him, and an honor.
To think of him in a blue uniform
Rolling on brown
And shrieking: It's beautiful,
Is an honor to one of our presidents.
To think of General Grant's brass buttons
Rolling as he rolled on brown
Is to have hard goldeny shiningness
In true motion. . . .

Real Cows

In the plain, the real cows
Looking towards a sun,
And moving over a plain,
In the hushed afternoon of the west
On the old plain
Existing when other cows did.
Such a hush that afternoon,
Cows participating.
Participation of cows was welcome.

Divine Record as to Shakey, A Pussycat

Only God could make Shakey:
And He has.
Only God could make Shakey come into our lobby so we could have her:
And He has.
Only God could make Shakey leap and bite, affectionately, the round part of our hands:
And He has.
What a record is the record of the Divine as to Shakey.

But it is the guileless voice of the title poem that creates the most formidable silences.

. . . . . .
Here, once, Indians shouted in battle,
And moaned after it.
Here were cries, yells, night, and the moon over these men,
And the men making the cries and yells; it was

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Hundreds of years ago, when monks were in Europe,
Monks in cool, black monasteries, thinking of God, studying Virgil;
. . . . . .
Machines that fly are clumsy and ugly;
Birds go into the air so softly, so fairly; see its curves; Earth!
In Montana, men eat and have bodies paining them
Because they eat.
. . . . . .
In 1755, Braddock was ambushed and died, and then, in Paris
men and women wrote of philosophy who were elegant,
witty and thought spirit was of matter; say Diderot,
Helvetius, and Madame du Deffand; Samuel Johnson was
in London then; Pitt was in England; men lived in Montana,
Honolulu, Argentina and near the Cape of Good Hope;
O, life of man, O, Earth; Earth, again and again!

This curious intermingling of strains would cause no genuine trouble if it were not complicated by something else. Mr. Siegel sometimes adopts a posture both humorless and pompous on what I think we are supposed to understand as a lofty intellectual plane. "Free Poem on 'The Siegel Theory of Opposites' in Relation to Aesthetics" with its epigraph, "Vivent les contrariétés!—Antoine-Marie Lemierre" and "Amiable Thoughts for Someone in a Hospital" with its subtitle, "A Poem of Aesthetic Realism" are in this idiom. About these matters Mr. Siegel takes himself very seriously indeed. He has appended notes at the end of his volume as explication and additional statement. There is a charm to some of this; the note on the General Grant poem quoted above says: "I thought that the idea of General Grant rolling on the grass around Vicksburg would give the Civil War something notable." Miss Stein would have approved. But here is another note: "Hot Afternoons, in a way, is an outgrowth, in heat and color, of The Scientific Criticism, an article that appeared in the *Modern Quarterly* for March, 1923. A thing—here the thing as art—was said in the article mentioned to have something in common with all things; and one thing all things have in common, is that they can be thought about, that is, they are objects. The inter-relation of objects stirred me in 1924, as it does now. That a mountain has to do with a child's smile, Braddock with Voltaire, Washington Irving with a valley in Colorado. . . ." There is more on the subject of Aesthetic Realism, which Mr. Siegel himself founded, in his preface to the poems; and there he speaks not only of its principles ("Aesthetic Realism is about the having-to-do-withness or relation of people, it is they, is themselves. A person is a tremendous and concentrated drama of sameness and difference, isness and elseness. A person is a history, a being, and a possibility of aesthetic opposites") but also of a Society dedicated to its propagation. In doing honor to the members of this group he says, "Names as they go with people can be poetry," and among those he names are Sheldon Kranz, Yetta Riegelhaupt, Jack Musicant and Fanny Riemerfeld.

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ROBERT MARTIN ADAMS

Dreadful Symmetry[1]

How much of an autonomous discipline is literary criticism? Is it in fact a "field" intermediary between philosophy and history, as the existence of "English" and "literature" departments on university tables of organization suggests? Or should the criticism of literature scale itself to the criticism of plastic art and the criticism of music—activities of evident value in themselves, but frankly subordinate to the disciplines they serve? In other words, does literary criticism need a conceptual universe of its own? Professor Northrop Frye has written a brilliantly suggestive and encyclopedically erudite book to prove that it does; and he has done his impressive best to provide a framework for this universe. His book is a signal achievement; it is tight, hard, paradoxical, and genuinely witty. It encounters in the present reviewer one who is perfectly sceptical of the value or possibility of a conceptual universe for literary criticism.

So far as "criticism" is taken to include literary history, categorization, and description (i.e, the disciplines customarily subsumed under the head of "philology"), this dim and negative view must be modified. Description, categorical and historical, is certainly possible, and can be done much better than it has yet been done. Professor Frye has some exciting and splendid ideas of how to do it. His account of literary genres and literary themes is admirably fresh in its conception and fully worked-out in its details. There is some unnecessary embroidery on it; but one does not have to identify comedy with spring, romance with summer, tragedy with autumn, and irony with winter, to see that these are four modes of dealing with experience under which a good deal of literature, sub-literature, and general human feeling can be arranged. If one wishes to predicate a central unifying myth for all four modes, Professor Frye with a slight readjustment will produce one, with *agon* as the basis for romance, *pathos* as the theme of tragedy, *sparagmos* as the type of irony and satire, and *anagnorisis* as the essence of comedy. But this again is a frill for one's lamb-chop, and optional; Professor Frye's best description goes in the more specific direction, when he undertakes to show the themes which typically are associated with these four major forms, and which contribute to make the different varieties of them different. Here he is simply brilliant in his command of the material; and I have no impulse to oh-come-now even his consideration of Poe's Gold Bug as an epiphany analogous to Jack's beanstalk, Jacob's ladder, a Pisgah-sight of Palestine, Spenser's Garden of Adonis, or Virginia Woolf's Lighthouse. If we take it as patent that existing literary categories are

[1]ANATOMY OF CRITICISM, by *Northrop Frye*. Princeton University Press. $6.00. PROBLEMS OF ART, by *Susanne K. Langer*. Scribner's. $3.50.

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shambling and inadequate, and if categories based on themes are proposed as substitutes, they must take account of the themes wherever they appear. Professor Frye would not much disturb me if he introduced Mr. Al Capp's vision of Upper and Lower Slobbovia as a "symbolic presentation of the point at which the undisplaced apocalyptic world and the cyclical world of nature come into alignment." In fact, he would be absurd if he refused to admit, not only Lil Abner and Orphan Annie, but Sexy Stories, singing commercials, and the Ford Salesman's Handbook into his categories. A theme is a theme.

Thus the categories as described undoubtedly exist, and exist generally enough to enclose significant bodies of material; indeed, they can be extended or complicated to the point where they become absurd or cumbersome without altering their basic descriptive value. They are not always as easy to apply as Professor Frye's brevity leads him to suggest. He distinguishes, for example, four varieties of comic characters (everything runs to fours in this book), the *alazons* or impostors, the *eirons* or self-deprecators, the *bomolochoi* or buffoons, and the *agroikoi* or churls. Taking a comic character at random, I find that Andrew Undershaft, in *Major Barbara*, can, according to the episode one selects, be described as all four of these. In the same way, by selecting various episodes and aspects of character, I have noted no less than 25 archetypal originals for Fabrizio del Dongo, not counting either Oedipus or Christ. None of them have anything whatever to do with making the *Charterhouse* the sort of novel it is, but they certainly do exist. I cannot tell how one prevents this novel from falling into 25 different categories. Once again, this sort of fact does not impeach the existence of the categories, it only limits their usefulness.

But Professor Frye's critical machinery is limited primarily by its remoteness from anything like a scheme of values. Once or twice he slips; and, in describing a hypothetical romance in which the hero, returning from a quest, flings off beggars' rags and stands forth in a scarlet cloak, goes so far as to say that "the solar analogy explains why the hero's act is an effective and conventional incident" (p. 188). Begging Professor Frye's pardon, the analogy with solar myth does nothing of the sort. The act is conventional because many other authors have imagined acts like it; why they did so, neither Professor Frye nor I really know. We certainly cannot invoke the concept of the archetype, defined as "a symbol which recurs frequently," to provide an antecedent reason why certain symbols recur frequently. As for effectiveness—but how do we know that this hypothetical romance is effective at all?—I will propose another one, the most ineffective romance ever written, or one too dreadful even to be written at all, in which the hero goes through this same byplay with beggars' rags and scarlet cloak. Does the solar analogy explain its ineffectiveness?

No, no, this is the old trick of archetypal critics; arguing that because a ritual was known to the Samoyeds and Telugu, an analogue to it makes *Paradise Lost* a great poem. Professor Frye is too wise to indulge

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in such recondite claptrap. His footnote knows better than his text; and goes on to point out that "archetypal criticism, which can do nothing but abstract and typify and reduce to convention, has only a 'subconscious' role in the direct experience of literature, where uniqueness is everything." I would add that it often has only a "subconscious" relation to the literary materials from which it pretends to derive; and that its "central expanding pattern of systematic comprehension" often appears to exist only by virtue of its remoteness from many of the facts it pretends to comprehend.

Professor Frye seems to feel that his present volume needs, to complement it, another one concerned with practical criticism. I shall read it with the greatest pleasure, for the extraordinary individual qualities of mind which it will undoubtedly display. Professor Frye's is one of the strangest and most interesting literary minds in existence; like a whirling dervish, he incorporates somehow a Thomistic rigor, a prophetic vigor, and the diabolical persuasiveness of the Ancient Mariner. Unlike most of the archetypal fellows, he has a sense of literary structure and discipline; unlike most of the disciplined fellows, he has a burnished and brilliant imagination. Sometimes sheer exuberance leads him into relatively empty paradoxes; for example, his argument might have stood well enough without a demonstration that musical poetry is perforce cacophonous (one of the underlying impulses here was no doubt an "unconscious" numerological preference for the four-beat line as the basic English meter). Still, he is the most exciting critic around; I do not think he is capable of writing a page which does not offer some sort of intellectual reward.

And yet his work seems to me wholly unsound—not merely overextended in this detail or that, but engaged, like a good deal of other contemporary criticism, on a search for conceptual unity at a level which can lead only to exaggerated, strained, and confused interpretations of literary fact. To argue the point at length is clearly beyond the scope of a review. But I can suggest something of the argument by a brief analogy with a modest sister-discipline, that of history. The historians as I see them are not much bothered with the business of developing a conceptual universe of their own. Not that they are, God forbid, in a state of blissful universal agreement. On the contrary, they suffer from as many conflicting categories, as frantic a lack of adequate terminology, and just as many incompatible schools of interpretation as does literary criticism. Yet they have relatively few misgivings about their procedures and a total lack of that sense of academic encirclement which seems to haunt Professor Frye. Happy in their traditional *Lebensraum*, they seem content to live with no loftier common principle than a general mutual regard for the rules of historical evidence. Their condition is not Utopian; they still have a few crackpots who try to tell them what history as a whole is all about; and I myself think they would do well to formulate into something more distinct than a gentleman's agreement the rules of the game they are playing. But I think, as their

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approach is essentially modest, it provides access to most truths possessed of a vigorous dimension and a reasonable resistance to the wintry eye of scepticism. The hectic flush of the enthusiast, if it is not subdued entirely, at least knows approximately what standards it must meet to be accepted as a healthy intellectual complexion.

Professor Frye's *Anatomy* implies in its title a certain devotion to the bare bones, the minimum essentials of criticism. By conservative standards, it is a rococo skeleton indeed—not without a certain Ronald-Searles charm, by virtue of its intellectual flourishes and curlycues, but about as stripped and quintessential as the Albert Memorial. An important crux is provided by Professor Frye's discussion of "The Anagogic Mode: Symbol as Monad"; and it is a pity that he has based his account of this mode of literary understanding on nothing more than the assertion (p. 118) that we must predicate it if the rest of his system is not to appear meaningless. This is not a very good argument to the uncommitted reader. Supporting quotations from Blake and Hooker might serve to tack down the anagogic mode if Blake and Hooker were unquestioned authorities, and if the quotations did not unfortunately contain or imply multiple contradictions of themselves and of one another. (Infinity as such is not a place where the process of man's desire can rest contented; the infinite, whatever else it is, is not necessarily an order; and the fact that infinite order can be imagined is no evidence that it exists, except as centaurs, phoenixes, and unicorns also exist.)

Finally, I confess to a total inability to follow the higher reaches of Professor Frye's anagogic thought. How is the argument that literature is a total form helped by the observation that all men understand what food is? Noises, noses, and excretion are all universal too, but don't help me much to envision a total shape for literature. Even if all men understand what food is, and so make of food a "central symbol," i. e., a lowest common denominator of human experience, what does it mean to say that "Nature is now inside the mind of an infinite man who builds his cities out of the Milky Way" (p. 119)? As an explanation of literature, this set of considerations seems to demand some pretty elaborate explanations of its own. I do not, by any means, think it wrong to believe in "the whole of nature as the content of an infinite and eternal living body which, if not human, is closer to being human than to being inanimate" (p. 119); but I think it is wrong to make such a belief prerequisite to the understanding of literature. My own conviction is that the world rests on the back of a very large tortoise.

In fact, Professor Frye is afflicted with a will to believe which overflows into a will to see in literature as many elements as possible. It is odd to note how his acute and flexible mind turns back from any argument that would have the effect of eliminating a pattern or subordinating an element in the design. At one point he argues that there are many things in a musical score which reveal themselves to study and are therefore no less real than those melodic outlines which one can hear in the concert-hall (pp. 85-86). This is undeniable. The brush-strokes and the

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undercoating on a canvas (which can be seen by infra-red cameras and microscopes) are no less real than the design and the color. But to be aware of them is no essential part of "seeing the picture" and may even be a distinct (I will not say "incompatible") way of seeing it.

Rejecting as he does all varieties of the "intentional heresy", and unwilling as he is to develop any substitutes, Professor Frye seems to me singularly deficient in devices for straining junk out of literature. Presumably he does not feel it to be junk. But this is precisely the mark of "scientific" thought (or progressive thought, or coherent, orderly thinking of any sort)—its ability to separate the attractively irrelevant, and possibly even true, observation, from that which is in fact operative. It is the pattern of evaluative criticism (in the traditional sense) to shuttle back and forth, trying to show what elements in the literary work cause it to have precisely the effect it does have, and what effect it should have by virtue of the elements which are demonstrably in it. But there is a rational check on the operative elements one sees in a literary work; they are distinctive elements precisely as they have distinctive effects. And an effect is legitimized to the degree that it can be traced to a distinct and proportionate cause. Professor Frye provides no such system of checks and balances, at least in the present volume; and no basis on which to separate the archetypal theme which muddles or vulgarizes its work of art from that which fulfills it. Conceivably this will be the work of his next volume; he might have calmed many anxieties by making the promise explicit. His present book remains, in its own right, a stimulating and agile production, which will have served many purposes, direct and indirect, even if it does not provoke, as one hopes, an equally alert and somewhat more sober consideration of the rules of literary evidence.

Professor Frye's four essays are said to contain the substance of four public lectures delivered at Princeton in March, 1954; but in their present form, they are far removed from public lectures, being tightly argued and polysyllabic beyond the possibility of auditory comprehension. Mrs. Susanne Langer's *Problems of Art* is also a volume of public lectures, delivered on various occasions, and unified here into a surprisingly coherent and consecutive little volume. Their roots are in Mrs. Langer's previously published *Feeling and Form*, to which they serve as a pendant, or perhaps a posterior popular introduction. In any event, like their parent-volume, they present no structures of criticism as such, but rather a series of footings and foundations on which to build a criticism. Calm, lucid, genial, and deliberately conversational, they are models of the easy, graceful introductory talk; and one is perhaps ungrateful in remarking that we've been here a good many times before. The author's concept of artistic space and time as "virtual" is a neat solution to an old problem; her emphasis on feeling and expression goes comfortably hand in hand with an emphasis on the supremacy of a form which it pleases her to call "organic". One couldn't ask for a little volume more at ease with itself. And yet, if it isn't unfair to say so, one

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misses the edged and uncomfortable questions of the person who has dealt closely with literary art, and at first hand. Art has dynamic form and organic rhythm—well enough; but what are the operative differences which make Blackmore bad art and Milton great? Mrs. Langer's book leaves a good deal of scope for such detailed analysis, and offers some encouragement to it, but undertakes nothing of the kind itself. Indeed, this is not the sort of book, nor is Mrs. Langer's the sort of mind, which would make much headway in such work; so that her passing account of a Blake lyric is more than perfunctory, in a nice way it is grotesque. Precisely because the symmetry it proposes is on a rudimentary and preliminary level, the volume provides an intellectual tool which is adaptable to many commitments. But in itself it scarcely formulates more than the first principles of a number of possible literary approaches.

There is something Promethean about Professor Frye's cosmic undertaking; Mrs. Langer is safer and probably saner, but one misses the wild, ancient vertigo, the sudden flights down long romantic alleys of speculation, the audacious leaps and inter-connections. Well, we cannot all have all the virtues; the amateur of critical systems will rarely find two such contrary approaches to the problem of providing for artistic judgment a conceptual framework and a logical structure.

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MARY EMMA ELLIOTT, Managing Editor

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 26th day of November, 1957.

EARLE R. WEST
Notary Public
(My commission expires March 30, 1959.)

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BENJAMIN DE MOTT

Cozzens and Others[1]

"I CANNOT IMAGINE," says a character in a recent English novel, "how anyone studying Henry James could possibly feel crude."[2] This reminder that books make us feel one way or another as we read has special urgency for the reporter on new American fiction; if he fails to heed it he will find himself detained in Analysis and Evaluation of items about which a word or two describing how they made him feel at the time of reading would really be quite enough. Consider for example the second novel of Mr. Jack Kerouac, late of the football team at Columbia. The book's claims have to be acknowledged: one of our Quality Magazines speaks of it as a work of great vigor and drive, and, considering its author's relations with the West Coast howlers, to ignore it would be to ignore a New School. But acknowledgment is all that is appropriate for a book whose sentences read like these:

> He is a great scholar who goes reeling down the New York waterfront with original seventeenth-century musical manuscripts under his arm, shouting. He crawls like a big spider through the streets. His excitement blew out of his eyes in stabs of fiendish light. He rolled his neck in spastic ecstasy. He lisped, he writhed, he flopped, he moaned, he howled, he fell back in despair. He could hardly get a word out, he was so excited with life. Dean stood before him with head bowed, repeating over and over again, 'Yes. . . Yes . . . Yes.' He took me into a corner. 'That Rollo Greb is the greatest, most wonderful of all. That's what I was trying to tell you—that's what I want to be. I want to be like him. He's never hung-up, he goes every direction, he lets it all out, he knows time, he has nothing to do but rock back and forth. Man, he's the end! You see, if you go like him all the time you'll finally get it.'

Plainly this kind of writing makes its reader feel badly—not crude, to be sure (distinctions are possible at any level), but rather (putting it with precision) like a slob running a temperature of 103.6. Given the times, we can be sure that someone will regard this as a desirable state of feeling; let us leave Mr. Kerouac to that person and advance.

Unquestionably we do nothing less than advance when we move from Mr. Kerouac to Mr. Andrew Lytle, one of our major Southern literary gentlemen. We do not feel crude reading *The Velvet Horn*; instead we feel literary. Here is a specimen sentence of Mr. Lytle:

[1]BY LOVE POSSESSED, by *James Gould Cozzens*. Harcourt, Brace. $5.00. ON THE ROAD, by *Jack Kerouac*. Viking. $3.95. THE VELVET HORN, by *Andrew Lytle*. McDowell, Obelensky. $3.95. ON THE LINE, by *Harvey Swados*. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $3.75.

[2]Quoted inexactly from John Hearne, *The Faces of Love* (Faber, 1957), an interesting book about the West Indies.

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> Even Jack Cropleigh, slouching forward in the saddle, his back curved to a fluid repose, his leg thrown over the pommel cradling his body, apart from the piston plunge of the mule's back, the mule on a slant boring into the air up the side of the Peaks, the rider suspended there as if some wand had put him to a hundred years' sleep, as if he were being propelled out of some pre-ordained magic as old as the world and out of the world's old mystery; or as if he floated upon a column of air and the mule moved and they, touching, did not touch but approached, as the object moving half the distance approaches the forever denied horizon—even if he had stopped cursing old Queen.

This is so much like Faulkner that it must be literature. The writer's determination to carry forward his master's experiments is everywhere visible, as for example in paragraphs that begin

like this one. We notice the mastery of the Southern idiom, that vivid and compelling literary dialect spoken most naturally in backwoods cabins where the King James version and Addison and Steele and Locke and Hume were familar as any washpot ("I mind the time," she said . . . Everbody dancing and singing, and you and your play-pretty, Eddie Dunbaugh, a-laying out in the bushes seeing whichaer one could out-guzzle the other"). The manners are throughout those of the Serious Writer, the man who can afford to take the arrogant, "to hell with you, nigger" line when told that the reader deserves to find his bearings before he is halfway through a book. The matter too is ruthlessly literary—Fratricide, Incest, Illegitimacy, the Civil War, the Wilderness. And the feelings described—as in the following passage where sister Julia tells brother Duncan, who is incestuously attached to her, that Cousin Joe wishes to marry her—are those of the most powerful art:

> "Cousin Joe is going to build me a house on his farm. And a room in it for you, Bubba."
>
> Duncan's voice trembled in sudden despair. "I was going to show you where the turkey hen hides her nest."
>
> "Oh, Bubba," she answered, just aware of his hurt.

It is no doubt perfectly true that this writer cannot help himself; he had no choice but to give himself up to Faulkner. It is also true that one's displeasure with *The Velvet Horn* is in part a product of simple impatience with the posturings of Southern literary gentlemen—the quiet dignity, the casual mention of My Revolutionary Ancestor and My Brief Stay at Oxford, etc., the tiresome discourses on timeless time and timelessness just in time not out of time. But these observations do not modify the conclusion, which is that Mr. Lytle makes his reader feel that novels are about novels, not about experience, that the act of reading a novel is no different from the act of watching an Impersonator do his turn. The book that gives rise to such feelings cannot be seriously praised.

If Mr. Kerouac makes us feel slobbish and Mr. Lytle makes us feel

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literary, Mr. Harvey Swados makes us feel uncomfortably objective—as though we were sociologists, students of types and patterns in American lower middle class culture. Mr. Swados is a writer of intelligence, and the portrait of a business man in his first novel established his power to project a character of imaginative rather than sociological substance. But there are no such figures in the present collection of sketches; Mr. Swados here chooses to draw his people—various types brought together in an automobile factory—from the outside. When any of them speak it is as if the lines in some graph of social divisions had been given "representative" voices. Here for instance is A Wife:

> "Carl, you know that's silly. If it hadn't been for moving out to the country, we'd never have bought this nice house in a nice community, with Jeanie having a chance to meet refined boys and get away from the riffraff." She added hastily, "And with you not having to go far to work. It's worth putting up with some inconveniences when you think of the progress we've made just in this year alone. That's a sweet boy Jeanie's out with tonight, you know? A college boy."

To read this is to observe an abstraction rather than to engage imaginatively with an experience. It should be said, however, that some of the abstractions of *On The Line*—The Time Study Man, The Quality Control Officer, The Union Agent—are relatively new to fiction, and that the book does succeed in rendering a sense of factory life. On balance, the performance, though less dense in imaginative life than *Out Went the Candle*, makes one feel a little more certain than before of Mr. Swados's future. In the patient evenness of the book's presentation there is something that suggests that when the writer again works with a subject chosen by his imagination, the result will be a book that demands to be responded to not merely as a novel but as a very good novel indeed.

No other response is possible to Cozzens's new book; to engage with it is to be advanced at least at moments to the novel reader's state of grace. That is to say, Cozzens is capable on occasion of making his reader feel perceptive, aware of the difference between fantasy and fact and interested in their relationships, experienced enough to know that there is not so much elegance and order in life that anyone will be harmed by another glance at either, nor so little drabness and chaos as to permit the easy adoption of what is called A Balanced View. One knows quite well (despite the gassy paeans of the first reviews) that the book is no masterpiece—Cozzens is not a major writer, however considerable he looks when compared with the common herd. He excites the senses with no new way of seeing and speaking, discovers no lost continents; both his range of feeling and his power of reflection are limited; as an observer and as a dramatist he is, as a rule, only deft. Moreover, though we learn from him something important about ourselves, we learn it not from a single book—not even from *By Love Possessed*—but rather from the shape of the career that this book has brought to a momentary climax.

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But to repeat, he can almost always be read without a suspension of common intelligence, and to say this is to say a good deal.

If the sense in which the new book gives point to Cozzens's career is to be specified, some sort of account—it can only be brief—will have to be provided of the earlier novels. Probably the central observation to be made about these books (I exclude the juvenilia of course) is that all were marked by concern with professional competence in the workaday world. (*Ask Me Tomorrow* might be an exception, but for reasons that cannot be gone into here, I do not think it is.) Hemingway's professional knew bulls or fish, guns or wines—having taught himself; Cozzens's professional knew torts or bacteria, Latin syntax or the Gospel According to St. Matthew—having been to graduate school. On occasion Cozzens ventured outside the office: he was on the sea in *S. S. San Pedro* (1931) and in the air in *Guard of Honor* (1948). But neither of these regions was created as the habitation of romance or of heroism: the ship, like the law library, was to be taken as an instance of the always precarious triumph of a disciplined order of operations over the usually unmanageable chaos of nature. Watching his senior officers direct a freight loading, the Spanish first quartermaster of the *San Pedro* was moved to reflect on the degree to which the sight was all expressible as *tela*—a word of wide enough meaning to include not only the "Spanish sense of tone, texture, woven firmness," but also "the untranslatable value of a plan," and "that beautiful gift of the white man, the disciplined cooperation, speed, precision of people quick and certain about their duties." The abstraction thus defined was, for this officer, "the last perfect pleasure," and over the years Cozzens's responsiveness to it never lacked for critical notice.

What this responsiveness signified, though, was difficult to say; while it was shared by many writers, old and new, it was shared with differences. Usually when the novel imparted information about trades—whether the pickpocket's or the stonemason's or the hackwriter's—it did so with a pretense of disinterest; Cozzens's fiction dropped the pretense. The author of *The Just and the Unjust* hardly bothered to disguise the truth that he cared more about the workings of the law than about the fate of the priggish Abner Coates and his girl; in book after book he interrupted his often quite conventional story with accounts of the innards of high callings and low—details of medicine, of church government, military organization, even of building construction—and always the preference was for the operation rather than for the operator. One tended to think of the accounts of technical proficiency as part of the writer's effort to contend against the modern consciousness that the triumphs of the organizing mind—or of Civilization—were unworthy of serious respect. But to accept this as their rationale required one to discount the fact that Cozzens's attitudes toward the particular modes of civilization he described were something less than positive.

Something far less, as it appeared on close inspection. Cozzens never dealt with the best artificers or with the best artifice—always with a

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bumbling lawyer who graduated at the bottom of his class, with a tumble-down eighteenth century mansion rather than with one that had been well preserved. Equally important, his novels all possessed the same ironic, somehow self-lacerating narrative design. The quartermaster of the *San Pedro* who gazed admiringly at his seniors did not know that his Captain was dying, that on this trip the ship would be mismanaged, that a debacle would result. In *The Last Adam* the well-equipped physician had a ten percent bile solution ready in the lab to do a blood culture, yet failed to recognize *bacillus typhosus*; men died as a consequence. The efficiency of the man of God in *Men and Brethren* cost him his health; he would step aside for a poorer administrator. The dull attorneys of *The Just and the Unjust* had a clear case and argued it doggedly, respecting the relevant points of law—but the case was lost. It seemed, in short, that Cozzens always had less than the full courage of his affections; wary of being caught out too baldly in the posture of a partisan of Order and Civilization, he everywhere indulged in self-protective irony which, though it hedged his bets, also obscured his meaning.

The irony is still present in *By Love Possessed*, and the narrative pattern is the pattern as before. The standards of a profession (finally of far more than a profession) are again set up for us to admire as a systematic ordering of experience; and again our discovery is that this system cannot hold anything fast, is, like any discipline, incommensurate to the roiling common chance of life. But this book advances beyond its own ironies. In its pages Cozzens gives as much to order, to style, to artifice, to made systems, made forms, as one suspects he has always, furtively, wanted to give. The first sentences of the book give us a key to the writer's new disposition of mind:

> Love conquers all—*omnia vincit amor*, said the gold scroll in a curve beneath the dial of the old French gilt clock. To the dial's right, a nymph, her head on her arm, drowsed, largely undraped, at the mouth of a gold grotto where perhaps she lived. To the dial's left, a youth, by his crook and the pair of lambs with him, a shepherd, had taken cover. Parting fronds of gold vegetation, he peeped at the sleeping beauty. On top of the dial, and all unnoticed by the youth, a smiling cupid perched, bow bent, about to loose an arrow at the peeper's heart. While Arthur Winner viewed with faint familiar amusement this romantic grouping, so graceful and so absurd, the clock struck three.

Had Cozzens ever written so before? On occasion (gold has been a favorite word of his from the beginning), but whatever the occasion one could be certain that a descent into flaccidity or looseness ("He was driving his new red convertible, a flashy job") would come quickly. From the note struck here, though, there is not much lapsing. And the firmness of the writing is only an outward sign of the more general elevation of his matter, and intensification of his commitment, that Cozzens achieves throughout the book. This is not, to take a trivial example, the first

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clock in a Cozzens novel: there was a timepiece on the *San Pedro* whose "magnificence testified to the rightness of the world;" the D. A. in *The Just and the Unjust*, at a moment when his case was going well, relaxed to remark about an old clock he bought at auction: "I like clocks. If I had some money, I'd collect them." And whatever else we know about clocks, we know that they are an obvious enough symbol of the orderly structuring of experience. But the symbol is treated far more positively, and reverberates rather more interestingly, in Arthur Winner's ironic rumination than before. This clock is neither mere vulgarity nor mere mechanism, it suggests where its rules do not apply, and is, in addition, valuable, precise, the best in its kind.

In the latter respect it is like all the appurtenances of order in the book. Houses and public buildings are stately and solid—appreciated at one level for triple courses of brick and double cross-braced joists, at another for excellence of design. Where in earlier novels Cozzens was steadfastly unimpressed, sometimes even embarrassed, by the Chippendale pieces, the buildings of the Federal style, or the sayings of the Greeks that surprisingly turned up on his page, here he is always appreciative of the well made thing. He quite unashamedly lets us know of his approval of Shakespeare and of carillons, of winged gates with urn-tipped finials, sycamore drives, wild gardens of columbine and fringed gentians, music boxes of burled walnut, and the like. And his men of order are significantly improved by their association with these admirable contrivances. The lawyers and judges are no second raters, the hero has a strong sense of the fragility of the order his outer life represents but he is nevertheless a person distinguished in intelligence and feeling, a fair match for any shyster down from the city.

As already indicated, the sense of the fragility of order is the correct sense for this hero to have. Arthur Winner's aged partner turns out an embezzler, his own effort to isolate and control an outbreak of meaningless sensuality in lives that impinge on his own wholly fails. But the failure matters less than does the writer's accomplishment in working up, with an accumulating density of detail, a situation in which it is possible for the reader not only to perceive but to care about the difference between order and its opposite. In the earlier books senselessness—seen variously here as the murder trial of a farmer's idiot daughter, the life of a grimly respectable boarding house, the mean encounter of a pimply adolescent with a roadhouse slut in the back seat of a car—rarely seemed more drab than that which contended against it. (The difference between the criminals of *The Just and the Unjust* and their accusers was unimpressive, though the writer had no Dostoevskian moral to make.) What else could one expect when institutions and orders were studied at a level at which they were not seen to their own best advantage, where clumsiness only coped with clumsiness? To dramatize the distinction he cared about, Cozzens had, as it were, to forget his inhibitions, and that is what he has done in this new book. In at least one brilliant scene—a moment of well-executed legal interrogation—he has shown his reader that pro-

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fessional competence, whatever its ultimate failings, can locate the difference between itself and the world, can probe the rotten body of life and return with a truth.

How important is it that we know of this possibility? Well, the knowledge might check our paralysis of mind a little—that claim could be made for it. Ironists all, we surely intend to go on scorning our professional, order-making selves, mocking their claims of victory on this or that trivial field of battle; but it does us no harm to hear that in spite of ourselves we do recover certain truths as we labor, that at the worst we do return from professional frays undeceived. It may not even harm us to think for a spell that our best selves are our professional selves, cold as the thought is to contemplation. The point, I submit, is that this *is* a thought, at least when felt as fully as Cozzens makes it felt in the best moment in his book; that its force is negative does not invalidate it as criticism of representative contemporary character.

Approaching the moment of evaluation we think of course of a hundred reservations. As the size of Cozzens's audience would attest, there is more than a little lubriciousness in the recounting of the triumphs of the disorderly flesh. *L'esprit est toujours la dupe du coeur*—well and good—400,000 copies. Also: to set up his distinctions as clearly as he has done, Cozzens has been forced into a kind of humorless social fantasy; the level of life he creates, extending out beyond isolated drives into a village, a club, a courthouse, is in 1957 a pure invention. Worse yet, the change in Cozzens's conception of his social world may owe as much to the reemergence between 1940 and the present of a vulgar plenty, as to any fundamental redefinition of his concerns on the part of the novelist. And finally one has to admit that, if *By Love Possessed* is an elegant, close-textured piece of writing throughout, it is also overlong and underdramatized. But judiciousness is, after all, a niggling virtue. The book deserves praise as a local success at the difficult task of elevating contemporary experience to the point at which it becomes interesting; it stands as a rare opportunity—rarer by far than even the most omni- of omnibus reviews can indicate—for the reader to lift himself briefly out of the sloughs of self-contempt into which the next new American novel he confronts will undoubtedly be determined to plunge him.

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KENNETH BURKE

The Carrot and the Stick, or

How Much by Promise, How Much by Threat? or
What's Loose in the World? or
Does Man Demand a Goat? or
What of Bunyan's Compulsive Slogan, "Sell him, sell him!"? or
See How, Like a Hurricane, It Goes Forward While
Going Round and Round[1]

FIRST, OF *Battle for the Mind, A Physiology of Conversion and Brain-Washing*—, or, as per the jacket: "How Evangelists, Psychiatrists, Politicians and Medicine Men can change your beliefs and behavior." The author, William Sargant, a "physician in psychological medicine," is not concerned "with the truth or falsity of any particular religious or political belief." His purpose is "to examine the physiological mechanisms involved in the fixing or destroying of such beliefs in the human brain."

His theory concerns ways of influencing the "mind" by physically affecting the "brain." Or, Dramatistically stated: Starting from Pavlov's experiments with the conditioning of dogs, he asks how symbolic action can be controlled through the medium of physical motion. For instance, there are purely physical means by which one can increase human suggestibility, most notably drugs and exhaustion.

From the standpoint of Aristotelian Rhetoric, a "physiology" of indoctrination would involve the use of "inartificial proofs," a variant of such "persuasion" as is got by torture, even when outright physical pressures such as flogging, burning, or the rack are avoided.

Though it contains nothing essentially new, the book is full of morbid marvels. And though the reader, before beginning it, thought of himself as fairly obstinate in his beliefs, after reading it he will be considerably chastened. At least, I had the feeling that, within a "reasonably" short time, any one who used these methods of "persuasion" on me could have me eating obediently out of his hand, or salivating as ecstatically at a painful electric shock as I might now do at the savor of a good steak.

Among the marvels was an incidental story of a non-believer who attended the meetings of a religious snake-handling cult, and before he was discovered, managed to engineer several easy seductions. There is a photograph of a young woman, in a frenzy of surrender, placing her hands upon a poisonous snake. True, she has no relation to the story of the non-believer; but when viewing her rapt expression caught in the photograph, we can understand how profound are the resistances which

[1]BATTLE FOR THE MIND by *William Sargant*. Doubleday. $4.50. THE HIDDEN PERSUADERS, by *Vance Packard*. David McKay. $4.00. THE ORGANIZATION MAN, by *William H. Whyte, Jr.* Simon and Schuster. $5.00.

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have been broken down, once one has brought oneself to yield in an act so antithetical to one's "normal" responses. And conceivably, immediately after such radical relaxation, more ordinary resistances would also be weakened, between the time of such "cleansing" and the time when the leader of the cult had doctrinally re-established them.

But whereas the author convincingly describes many purely physical devices and operations for the forming and reforming of attitudes, with corresponding effect upon ideas, I still doubt whether his book is as exclusively physiological in its emphasis as he would have us and himself believe. For instance, his chapter on Wesley's methods of conversion deals with the power of the word as such, to build up, by sheer eloquence, first the dread of hell's fire and then the promise of redemption, with the resources of social organization next being employed to prevent backsliding. Such procedures, it seems to me, concern the "symbol-using animal" as such, and are not reducible to sheer physiological conditioning. Similarly, in the discussion of "brain-washing," it is noted how the sense of guilt is built up in a person not by accusing him of anything, but by using various kinds of quietus (such as forbidding him to tell anyone about the interviews to which he is being subjected) which finally induce him to work up accusations against himself.

One can grasp the difference between symbolic and purely physical persuasion by quoting against the author a statement of Jonathan Edwards which he quotes as though it were on his side. Edwards regularly brought about conversion by seeking to make as intense as possible the sinner's sense of guilt, before finally offering him solace in the name of Christ. On this point, Edwards writes:

> Another thing that some ministers have been greatly blamed for, and I think unjustly, is speaking terror to those who are already under great terrors, instead of comforting them....To blame a minister for thus declaring the truth to those who are under awakening, and not immediately administering comfort to them, is like blaming a surgeon, because, when he has begun to thrust in his lance, whereby he has already put his patient to great pain, and he shrinks and cries out with anguish, he is so cruel that he will not stay his hand, but goes on to thrust it in further, till he comes to the core of the wound.

Actually, the similitude here should be interpreted in the light of the *difference* between such surgery, which is purely physiological, and Edwards' metaphorical probing along the lines of dramatic catharsis.

To speak of "probing" is to hit upon a perfect transition into *The Hidden Persuaders*, by Vance Packard, "An Introduction to the New World of Symbol Manipulation and Motivational Research," an inquiry into "What Makes Us Buy, Believe—and Even Vote—The Way We Do." In the course of his comically gruesome study, Mr. Packard has read so many advertising slogans, his style has a kind of billboard epigrammatic briskness, as indicated in his chapter headings, for instance:

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"The Depth Approach," "Self-Images for Everybody," "The Built-In Sexual Overtone," "Back to the Breast, and Beyond," "The Psycho-Seduction of Children," "The Engineered Yes," "Care and Feeding of Positive Thinkers," and "The Packaged Soul?"

Whereas in *Battle for the Mind*, persuasion was approached in terms of Pavlovian *conditioning*, here it is approached in terms of Madisonian *salesmanship*. More specifically, the book is concerned with the use of "depth psychology" in the marketing of goods and ideas. Readers who love to contemplate mild variants of diabolism should certainly take a look at it, though most of the scheming here studied has to do with the respectable, everyday Madison Avenue job of keeping the citizenry madly at work producing and consuming the largely unnecessary things with which the combination of business, industry, politics, miseducation, and our fast dwindling natural resources is now able, and even compelled, to flood us. By miseducation, in that line-up, I could very often mean simply advertising, as the author's particular collection of cultural horrors makes amply evident.

The work adds up to a proposition of this sort: How to sell everything for some reason other than the use for which it is pragmatically designed? For instance, don't sell a car simply for the purpose of efficient, reasonably priced transportation. Sell it to patch up some poor devil's inferiority complex (though at the same time, of course, you must keep his inferiority complex squirming vigorously, so that you may soon sell him another car for psychological reasons and before he pragmatically needs a replacement).

In fact, to read this book is to wonder where in the devil our national pragmatism (whether vaunted or maligned) has gone. You see the "Depth" people transforming every material commodity into some kind of *symbol*, and selling it, not for its material usefulness, but for some real or supposed *symbolic* value with which, by their schemings, they can manage to identify it. For instance, inasmuch as there are dozens of soaps on the market capable of keeping you clean, obviously one soap manufacturer can't compete against another simply on the grounds that his soap is a cleanser. Hence, "depth" probing, to discover some sales angle that, whereas it might apply to all brands of soap, could by astute advertising slogans be associated with a particular brand.

To get the cream of the book, look at the index and follow all the references to one Ernest Dichter, who must be consulted on a high hill, whither his devotees repair for sales advice, reportedly at $500 per diem. Presumably, said "earnest poet" has it all figured out this way: When confronting this mighty pile of junk (called "the higher standard of living") which is offered us daily in untold acts of persuasion, we find ourselves acquisitively goaded. But even while greedily wanting all we can get, we have vestiges of Puritanic guilt which require that our greed be moralized.

Thus, for instance, if you would induce a man to buy a car by identifying the horse power of the car with a thereby symbolically aggrandized

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power within himself, you should also find some slogan that would justify the purchase on a "moral" basis, as were you to say that the extra horsepower would give "that added margin of safety." Or, when the depth-prober has found that people associate candy with the idea of reward (as a result of childhood experiences, when they were given candy for "being good") then you might buck the low-calorie slogans by presenting candy as something one can allow oneself after a hard day's work.

Primarily, this book is dealing with the manipulation of symbols (and usually to such an extent, you tend to forget that very many of the commodities you here see being sold by tricks could also be recommended on purely rational grounds). As symbol-manipulation, it is in the field of rhetorical artifice, generally outside the physiological emphasis of the Sargant volume. Yet, ironically, the most gruesomely winsome story of all leans towards the Sargant side:

> *The London Sunday Times* front-paged a report in mid-1956 that certain United States advertisers were experimenting with "subthreshold effects" in seeking to insinuate sales messages to people past their conscious guard. It cited the case of a cinema in New Jersey that it said was flashing ice-cream ads onto the screen during regular showings of film. These flashes of message were split-second, too short for people in the audience to recognize them consciously but still long enough to be absorbed unconsciously.
>
> A result, it reported, was a clear and otherwise unaccountable boost in ice-cream sales. "Subthreshold effects, both in vision and sound, have been known for some years to experimental psychologists," the paper explained. It speculated that political indoctrination might be possible without the subject being conscious of any influence being brought to bear on him.

Though the author says that this story is not yet authenticated, it stands as the ultimate "scientific" ideal of the principle of hidden persuasion. It is, to perfection, the sort of thing "depth" advertisers are looking for. I love to contemplate the idea, and to think that probably I'm getting my daily dose of subthreshold indoctrination along with my daily dose of invisible fall-out.[2]

Mr. Packard shows us how anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and the like are willing to contribute their best, or their worst, towards

[2]Since the time when this review was written, many reports have been published confirming the authenticity of the *London Times* story. In *The Wall Street Journal* of September 13, 1957, the firm is said to be the Subliminal Projection Company, its founder "a motivational researcher and amateur psychologist who heads his own New York firm specializing in the naming of new products." The company is said to have applied for a patent on the idea though, if the patent is granted, "it would be a bit like Sigmund Freud getting a patent on his discoveries in the field of psychoanalysis." The article also refers to an experiment where a blank human face was shown on a screen. Also the words "angry" or "happy" were projected, but only in a

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the prodding of the citizenry into unintelligent voting and improvident purchases, thereby enlisting science in a cause in which the arts had already long been active. *The Organization Man*, by William H. Whyte, Jr., also touches considerably on this same point. This book is concerned with "the clash between the individualistic beliefs" which the Organization Man is "supposed to follow" and the "collective life he actually lives." Also, it tentatively evaluates "his search for a faith to bridge the gap." But though such a "damnably inoffensive" Organization Man is typically employed in big corporations that are designed wholly to sell their goods and services to the public, and is apparently a perfect specimen of *homo emptor* (an ideal victim for the wiles of the motivational researcher, down to the last twitch of "impulse buying"), we are assured that the sales department ranks very low in his esteem. Thus, whereas the first book treated of dogs and people *in extremis*; and whereas the second is concerned with efforts at high-powered goading under conditions in which the difference between the buying or non-buying of an unneeded commodity can mean the difference between the success or failure of the seller; the poignancy of this third book is of a different order. For the author seems to fear most that the class he has chosen to study (and in which he classes himself) is in danger of rotting from conformity to the policies of corporations that have the personality of benevolent overlords.

From the standpoint of my own notions about rhetoric, I would say that this third book shifts the emphasis from persuasion to identification. For it is concerned with the ways in which a class of sub-executives both spontaneously identify themselves with the company they work for and are selected by personnel directors who, with the help of personality tests, seek to make such identification the be-all and end-all of the "trainees'" lives.

Since the tendency is for the Organization Man to be given and to demand the kind of education that most directly re-enforces his adulation of the status quo, Mr. Whyte would advocate instead a stress upon a counter-principle: he would have education act as a corrective of the trend rather than being merely more of the same thing.

Though we are long accustomed to studies in competitive conformity, Mr. Whyte's analysis is done with all the latest paraphernalia, and makes for entertaining scientific gossip. Here is a novelistic kind of observation, with many illustrative anecdotes well told, and with some broad sociological generalizations serving as the cast of characters.

The book is built around a dialectic posing a contrast between what he calls a "Protestant Ethic" and a "Social Ethic." The Protestant

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flash, for a mere fraction of a second, an interval too brief for conscious recording. "The subjects tended to see the face as either angry or happy depending on what word was superimposed on it at the time."

I have also been informed that hearings are being held in Washington to discuss the advisability or possibility of making such enterprises illegal. The thought suggests the somewhat complicated notion that investors in this kind of project should hurry and flood the country with subthreshold suggestions designed to enlist legislators and the public against all Anti-Subliminalism.

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Ethic is equated with the competitive stress involved in the kind of work by which the founders of our big corporations built them. The Social Ethic is equated with the cooperative stress involved in the kind of work done by the "trainees" who now oversee the bureaucratic functions of the corporation. Since there is also the dialectical fact that competition involves cooperation and v.v., by the time you have finished the book the edges of this distinction have necessarily become somewhat blurred. However, predominantly, the author distrusts the attitudes of "acceptance" that go with such "bureaucratization." He calls for more questioning, less automatic tendency to assume that a working force should be one big happy family. And he skilfully backs his observations with enough surveys to floor you in case you needed to be floored.

In an appendix, the author tells you how to cheat on personality tests so that, in case the would-be Organization Man happens to have a spark of originality, independence, or temperamental zing, he can conceal the fact from his scientific inquisitors and can get the job on the basis of a score that makes him look quite non-controversially inane and sheeplike. It's a gallant idea; but the more closely I studied his advice, the more convinced I became that the science of screening out all but the lulus, if that's what the customer wants, is now close to perfection. Most of the spirited people I know would be tricked into self-revelation despite the author's rules of thumb.

All told, the book's comments on ways in which the imaginative aspects of science are being bureaucratized are quite relevant, though he is somewhat caught in his own traps. And just having done some work on Bunyan, I'd say that Mr. Whyte's views on the "Protestant Ethic" are outrageously skimpy.[3] Similarly, though he identifies "acceptance" with the improvised protocol and etiquette-mongering of his Organization Man, the term can legitimately have ampler meanings, as when applied to writers like Emerson, Whitman, and William James.

In any case, if you're interested in this damned business of motives which, I must admit, exercises me considerably, these books are all worth looking into. As regards motivational problems in general, I don't feel that any of the books approaches the subject from a sufficiently comprehensive point of view. They all gravitate towards "science" in the specialized sense rather than towards "poetry and philosophy." Yet each does bring out a different basic motivational strand. The first helps remind us how much the body affects our thinking, the second helps remind us that even the most physical of powers can be sought for furtively symbolic purposes, the third shows how imperious an "occupational psychosis" can be, in forming a way of life, and setting up *ad interim* goals that look like final goals.

[3]A study of the "hierarchal" motive in Bunyan helps us see how, midway between the two meanings of "noble" (the literal and the figurative) and the two similar meanings of "rich," lay the Puritan paradox whereby the conviction of one's great personal sinfulness testified to one's election.

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Addendum (*a few days later*): Now I know a major point I overlooked. Pavlov found that the identical degree of stimulus, when applied to different dogs, elicits different or even opposite responses. This would be a way of saying, in a scientistic parable, that one man's food is another man's poison.

The thought would suggest the strong possibility that, the more uniform an ideology, the more likely it is to produce resistances on the part of some persons subjected to it. The thought is both heartening and disheartening.

It is heartening insofar as it implies that people will never line up all alike, no matter how skilled the techniques for lining them up and standardizing them. But by the same token it is disheartening insofar as it implies that any pronounced regularity will produce its particular kind of deviation, its special brand of "criminals" (the Ins by one set of rules being the Outs by another). It's like saying that, if a room is stuffy, one person gets drowsy and another throws open a window.

This principle probably applies to education, too. In searching for an ideal system of education, we imply that the same approach would be good for all. Yet what one man gets beaten into him, another gets beaten out of him. And insofar as there are no beatings, one man flourishes from lack of threats where another rots in response to the overly permissive.

All the year round, mankind is an open season. And may the experiments of the physicist, as modified by the military, permit the experiments of the humanist to continue (if fittingly humbled by experience). Spare us the effects of a "progress" from the fall of Adam to the atomic fall-out.

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VIVIAN MERCIER

Letters Wrote by Shem and Shaun[1]

> I am only too painfully aware that Lucia [his daughter] has no future but that does not prevent me from seeing the difference between what is beautiful and shapely and what is ugly and shapeless. As usual I am in a minority of one. If I tell people that no tenor voice like Sullivan's has been heard in the world for 50 years or that Zaporoyetz, the Russian basso, makes Chaliapin sound like a cheap whistle or that nobody has ever written English prose that can be compared with that of a tiresome footling little Anglican parson who afterwards became a prince of the only true church they listen in silence. These names mean nothing to them.

THUS JOYCE IN A LETTER to Harriet Shaw Weaver of May 1, 1935. We have heard the tone before, in his creative work. This is not Stephen Dedalus being arty and avant-garde, but Shaun of *Finnegans Wake* "in his know-all profoundly impressive role," to quote his creator. Joyce had said in a letter of August 14, 1927, that this aspect of Shaun was drawn from a living model—presumably his brother Stanislaus—but in fact Shaun is just as much a self-portrait as Shem is. It is rather unfortunate that the majority of the letters now presented by Mr. Gilbert should be the work of Shaun. For 260 pages, or up to the end of the year 1931, Shem hardly gets a look-in. Were it not for the letters to Frank Budgen and Mrs. William Murray ("Aunt Josephine"), we should doubt that the pre-1932 Joyce was capable of creating Bloom. On the analogy of a recent Shakespeare theory, we might have to suppose that Synge, instead of dying in 1909, had been smuggled alive to Europe, where he issued his later works over Joyce's name.

We cannot of course blame Mr. Gilbert or his publishers for the quality of the letters surviving from Joyce's first fifty years. Joyce admits early that he is a bad correspondent, but many of the letters he did write cannot be found; for instance, he writes T. S. Eliot that he "was always in correspondence" with John Joyce, his father, but not a single one of these letters has turned up. If Mr. Gilbert had had any training in scholarship, or if he possessed even normal aptitude for his editorial task, he would have given us a sort of negative census, such as Allan Wade prefixed to his *Letters of W. B. Yeats*. Wade listed a number of lost correspondences, as well as some that were still extant but unavailable. As it is, one learns more of this matter from the two relevant paragraphs of the Slocum-Cahoon *Bibliography of James Joyce* than from the twenty-odd pages of preamble—mostly reminiscence of his Paris days—which Mr. Gilbert sees fit to give us. Both footnotes

[1]LETTERS OF JAMES JOYCE, edited by *Stuart Gilbert*. Viking. $7.50.

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and index, by the way, are far from complete; only Richard Ellmann's chronology shows a trained mind at work. Regardless of whether Mr. Gilbert can explain it or not, the fact remains that most of the letters which survive from this period are addressed to publishers or disciples: the former seem unable to make up their minds, while the latter have made up theirs for all eternity.

What we *can* blame on Mr. Gilbert and the publishers is the lack of balance shown by this volume as a whole. The "Introduction" and "Note on the Editing" make it quite clear that this is a selected not a collected edition. The letters dealing with Lucia's mental illness "represent only a tithe of those in which . . . he records his hopes and fears." Of the letters to Giorgio and Helen Joyce Mr. Gilbert says, "There could be no question of publishing them *in extenso*. . . ." Finally, he thanks "all those who kindly placed at the editor's disposal letters which, owing to lack of space, could not be included here." I am not condemning him for being too selective, however; he has not been selective enough. Of the 407 letters from Joyce gathered here, no fewer than 147, by my count, are addressed to Miss Weaver. While nobody feels more strongly than I do that her great generosity to Joyce should be generously remembered, I also feel that this correspondence overbalances the book, for a number of reasons.

Joyce's ties to Miss Weaver were professional rather than emotional: her assistance was given to the writer rather than the man, while on his side gratitude—however sincere—provided a weak emotional basis for their relationship. Only after the correspondence had been going on for nearly twenty years did he feel able to let himself go about his affection for his father and his anxiety concerning his daughter. Earlier, he did write a good deal about the pain and worry caused by his persistent eye trouble, but this was not really an intimate topic; also, he may have felt that he owed his patron an explanation whenever his work on *Finnegans Wake* was interrupted. The piecemeal elucidations of that book which he offered her are well worth having, though some have already been made public.

It is rather the maneuverings to win favorable mention for *Ulysses* and to build up an informed public for *Work in Progress* which become thoroughly tiresome. Here is an example:

> As regards the article in the *R. de D. M.* [*Revue des Deux Mondes*] I have been planning that for three years. I tried first the *Revue de Paris*, then the *Revue de France*. . . . I now intend to arrange an article of lower criticism, if possible, a textual analysis of either *Eolus*, *Sirens* or *Cyclops*. After that an illustrated and intelligent caricature and then the book may look after itself as best it can.

As if planting articles were not enough, we learn how he planted and virtually wrote a book of exegesis, *Our Exagmination* . . ., of which he writes, "Up till the last day I had to supervise it and check the references

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etc made by the 12. . . ." Surely this kind of thing will damage Joyce's reputation with the general reader in the same way that Trollope's *Autobiography* damaged his. True, Joyce sought readers, not money, as dozens of passages make clear, but newspaper reviewers have already shown their impatience with his methods. We can easily forgive Joyce, who spent ten years getting *Dubliners* before the public and learnt log-rolling the hard way—especially as he refused to lecture or give interviews—but Mr. Gilbert's imperfect selectivity lays unfair emphasis on this practice. My own view is that the Harriet Weaver correspondence should have been published separately, complete with *her* letters, for the Joyceans; only about sixty or seventy of Joyce's letters to her should have been included in the present volume.

However, the years 1932-9, unhappy as they were, help to redress the balance. The death of John Joyce at the end of 1931 destroys the Shaunian mask and curbs the Shemian evasiveness, at least for a time, so that we get a passage like this in a letter to Miss Weaver:

> My father had an extraordinary affection for me. He was the silliest man I ever knew and yet cruelly shrewd. He thought and talked of me up to his last breath. I was very fond of him always, being a sinner myself, and even liked his faults. Hundreds of pages and scores of characters in my books came from him. His dry (or rather wet) wit and his expression of face convulsed me often with laughter. . . . I got from him his portraits, a waistcoat, a good tenor voice, and an extravagant licentious disposition (out of which, however, the greater part of any talent I may have springs) but, apart from these, something else I cannot define. . . . It is a great consolation to me to have such a good son. His grandfather was very fond of him and kept his photograph beside mine on the mantelpiece.
>
> I knew he was old. But I thought he would live longer. It is not his death that crushed me so much but self-accusation. . . .

Lucia's illness has somewhat the same effect, as when he writes to Miss Weaver:

> There are moments and hours when I have nothing in my heart but rage and despair, a blind man's rage and despair.

To Constantine Curran, who had known him ever since his university days, he wrote of Lucia in his old Newman vein, but with at least equal sincerity:

> It is terrible to think of a vessel of election as the prey of impulses beyond its control and of natures beneath its comprehension. . . .

His letters to Lucia herself, like those to his son, Giorgio, and the latter's American wife, Helen, show much of the playfulness which

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bubbles up in his letters to Budgen, along with a tenderness reserved exclusively for his family. The one letter to his only grandchild, Stephen, is a *Wake*-like version of a French folk-tale. ("And when they put their heads out of their windows they cried: O Loire, what a fine bridge!") The later letters to Mr. Curran, like those to Mrs. Joyce's uncle, Michael Healy, are full of Irish allusions and stage-Irish humor. I cannot understand why Mr. Gilbert completely omits the correspondence with "little Alf Bergan" about John Joyce's tombstone and other matters, for it contains at least five letters which cast new light on John Joyce, his cronies, and certain passages in *Ulysses* and the *Wake*. Here, as elsewhere, I feel that Mr. Gilbert is largely indifferent to Joyce's Irish background—and indeed only values the Paris years, during which he knew Joyce personally.

Still, having filed all the above *caveats*, I don't quite know why some of the early reviewers complained so loudly about Joyce's share in this book. I should like to end with two quotations concerning *Ulysses*. Their humility, friendliness and humor contrast sharply with the arrogance, coldness and pomposity of certain passages quoted in previous American reviews:

1. *To Ezra Pound, April 9, 1917.* Unfortunately, I have very little imagination. I am also a very bad critic. For instance, some time ago a person gave me a two-volume novel to read, *Joseph Vance*. I read it at intervals for some time, till I discovered that I had been reading the second volume instead of the first. And if I am a bad reader I am a most tiresome writer—to myself, at least. It exhausts me before I end it. I wonder if you will like the book I am writing? I am doing it, as Aristotle would say, by different means in different parts.

2. *To Mrs. William Murray, November 10, 1922.* Dear Aunt Josephine: . . . I am glad to hear my book is in a press as other islanders are not like you in your indifference to its market value. You said Charley [one of Joyce's brothers] was reading it and that you would tell me what he said and how he looked after reading it. Is he in the press? If so I hope he gets his meals regularly but how does he manage about shaving? I gather that you have not finished it and neither has Berty [Mrs. Murray's son Bernard] but I think Nora [Joyce's wife] will beat you all in the competition. She has got as far as page 27 counting the cover.

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